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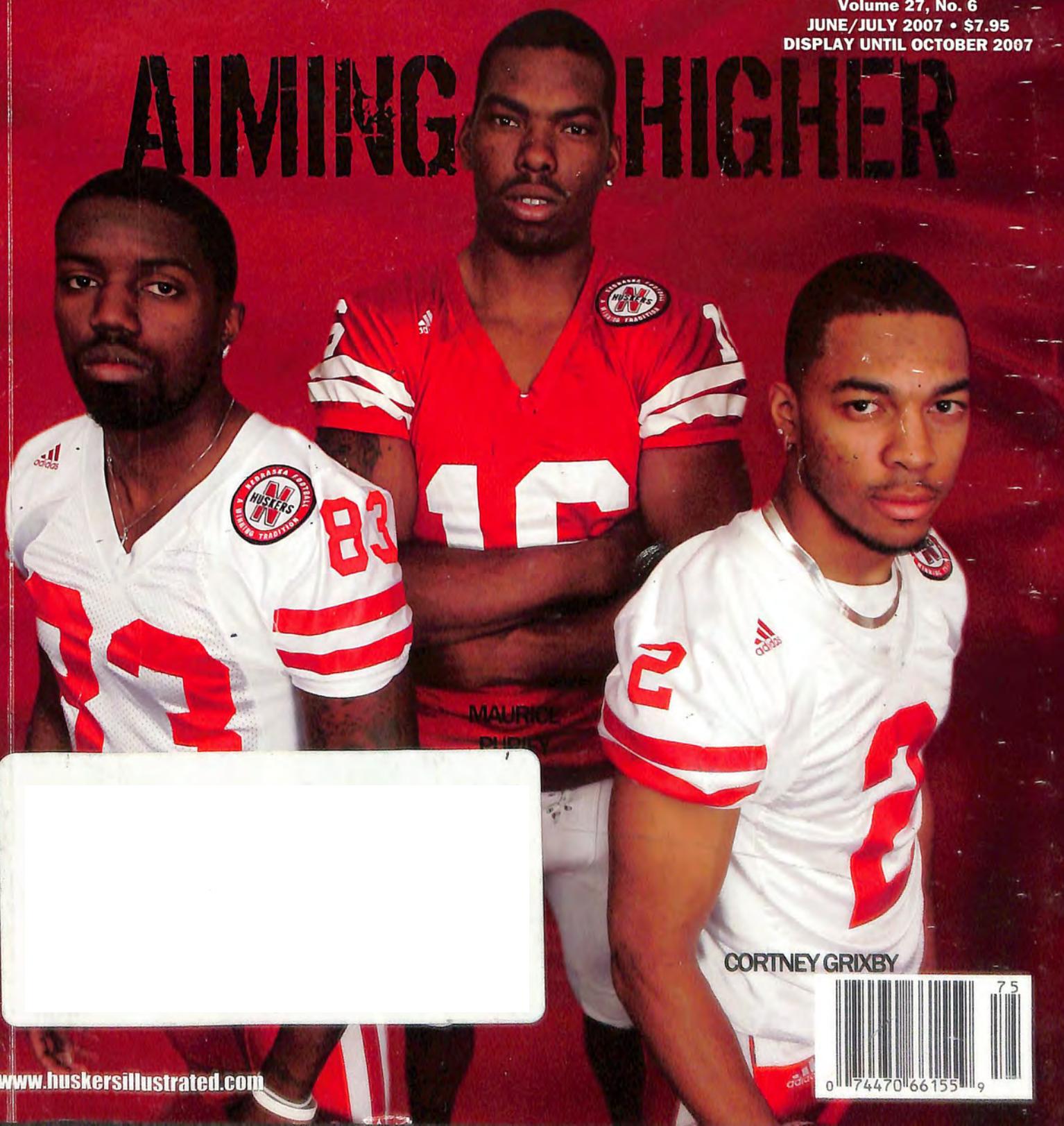
2007 FOOTBALL YEARBOOK

Volume 27, No. 6

JUNE/JULY 2007 • \$7.95

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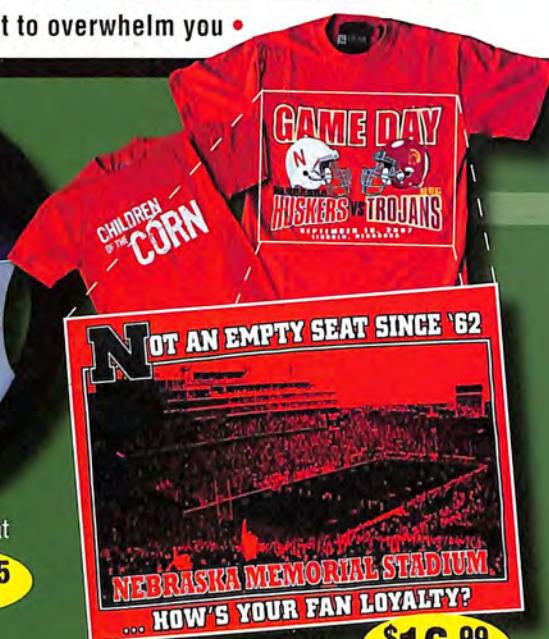
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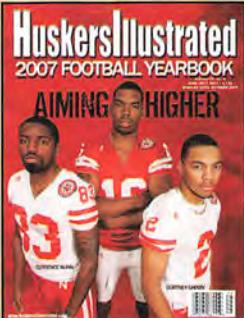
2007 FOOTBALL YEARBOOK

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ON THE COVER



This year's cover features wide receiver Terrence Nunn (83) and cornerback Courtney Grixby (2), who have the most starting experience on the team, and wide receiver Maurice Purify (16), who made a huge impact in his first season. Cover photo and design by Scott Bruhn.

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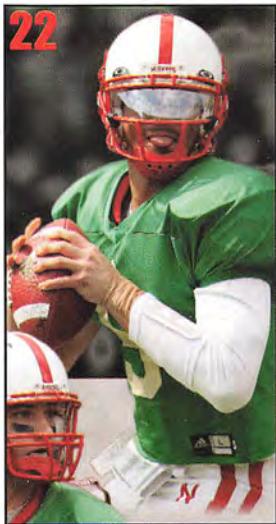
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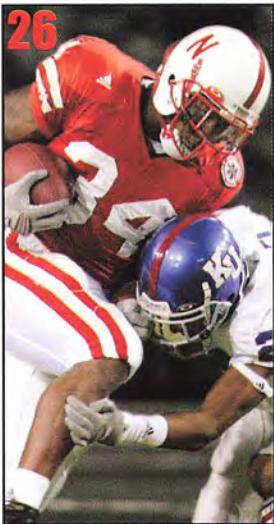
72 Oct. 6 games key in Big 12 race.



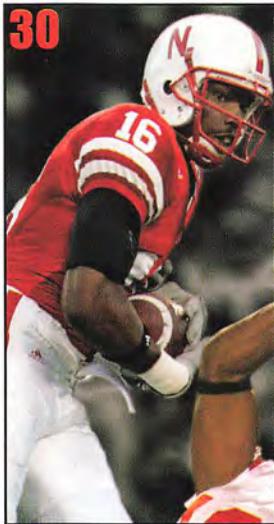
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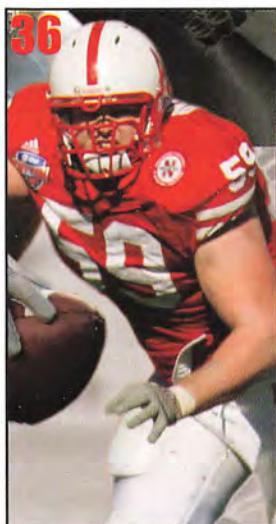
QUARTERBACK



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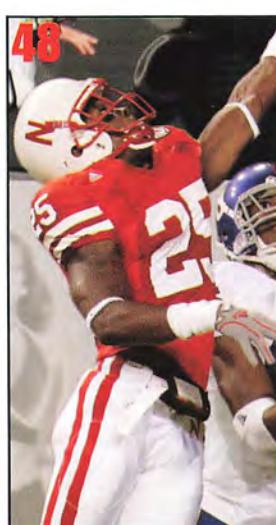
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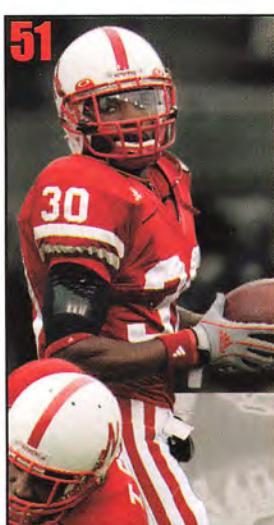
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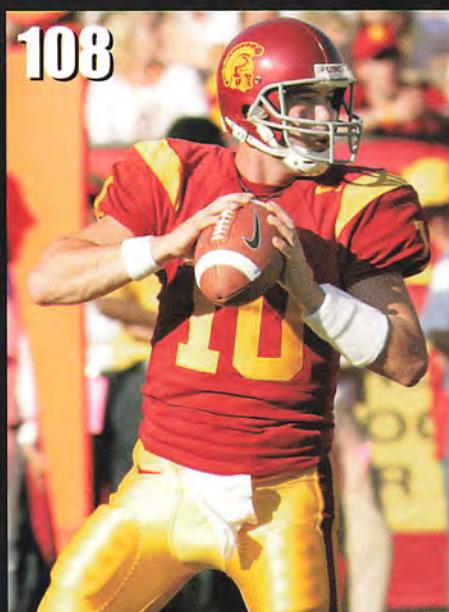
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Measuring Progress

Huskers show improvement in some ways, but what's in store in 2007?



**Brian
HILL**

SOME WOULD ARGUE that going from 8-4 to 9-5 wasn't really progress. Part of their reasoning could be the two straight losses to end the 2006 season, after the previous year ended with three straight victories.

Those on the side of progress would argue that the two losses came to teams ranked eighth (Oklahoma) and 10th (Auburn) in situations Nebraska was not in the previous year — the Big 12 Championship and a New Year's Day bowl game. They could also point to the 5-0 record against Big 12 North Division opponents and the dramatic improvement in offensive production.

The Huskers improved from 96th nationally in total offense in 2005 to 14th last season and ranked 17th in scoring, compared to 67th the previous season. Those are just some of the impressive numbers cited in contributing editor Mike Babcock's team preview story — "What's Next?" — in the *Huskers Illustrated* 2007 Football Yearbook.

You'll also find previews of the other 11 Big 12 Conference schools and Nebraska's four nonconference opponents. The always-popular media predictions section is back, you can read about the walk-on program, and you can check out the words of athletic director Steve Pederson in an interesting Q&A.

We have feature stories on cornerback Cortney Grixby and wide receiver Terrence Nunn, two members of the 2004 recruiting class who played without redshirting and lead the team in starting experience. Grixby, who has 28 career starts and ranks sixth on NU's career charts in pass breakups, was praised on signing day by coach Bill Callahan as "without a doubt, the most gifted and athletic player in this recruiting class." Of Nunn, the then new NU coach said, "We could feature him in a lot of differ-

ent ways. Hopefully, we can plug him in early." Nunn, who played in all 11 games as a true freshman, has made 27 career starts and has a shot at the record for career receptions, held by Johnny Rodgers.

The third player on this year's cover — senior wide receiver Maurice Purify — is the focus of one of our position-by-position breakdowns. Purify made a huge impact in his first season in Lincoln after transferring from City College of San Francisco.

That's been the formula in the last three recruiting classes — mixing in junior college players who can help right away with talented high school players.

Purify had a 63-yard touchdown reception on NU's second possession against No. 5 Texas. He later added a 21-yard reception that was a key play in helping the Huskers take a fourth-quarter lead. As you no doubt remember, that lead didn't hold up, but Nebraska did show it could play with the defending Big

12 and national champion.

The Huskers must face the Longhorns on the road (Oct. 27) in 2007, part of an extremely challenging schedule that includes perennial power Southern California in Lincoln in a prime-time ABC game Sept. 15. That's a week after NU's trip to Winston-Salem, N.C., to face a Wake Forest team, which is coming off an 11-3 season that ended with a 24-13 loss to No. 5 Louisville in the Orange Bowl, the Demon Deacons' first Bowl Championship Series appearance.

If Nebraska can navigate its difficult road to a 10-win season, and possibly a BCS spot, there would be no question about progress. ■

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of *Huskers Illustrated* (Volume 27, No. 7) is scheduled to mail the week of Aug. 20. Check for updates at www.huskersillustrated.com.

Huskers Illustrated

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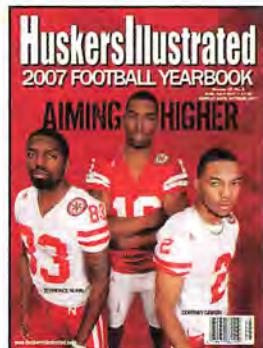
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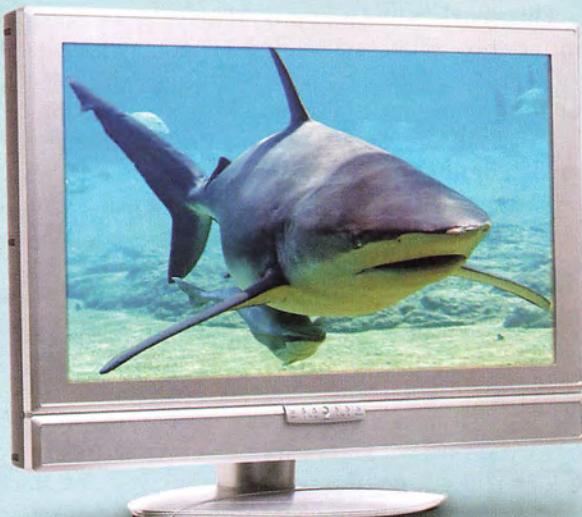
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Money Position

NFL Draft provides further evidence of the importance of left tackles



Mike Babcock

THE MOVE BECAME OFFICIAL a couple of weeks before the start of spring practice. That's when Carl Nicks was told he would be moving from right offensive tackle to left.

Though he was recruited for the position, Nicks said he wasn't expecting to switch sides. He started twice on the right side late last season, after Matt Slauson was injured, and figured he would stay there. However, "I'll play pretty much wherever they want me to play," he said.

"If they want me to play left, I'll play left. I was going to prepare hard, regardless."

He weighed 345 pounds at the time, maybe even a little more. But the coaches expect him to drop some weight, get down to 325 by the start of the season. He's OK with that, too.

At 325 pounds, he'll be able to move a little better. But his quickness isn't an issue. He has quick feet, as well as long arms, big hands and good height. He's listed at 6-foot-5, though in football shoes (he's quick to point out) he's an inch taller. Given the other attributes, the taller the better.

The point is, if a left offensive tackle were assembled from parts, he would look a lot like Nicks. And if those parts function properly, there's a lot of money to be made in the NFL a year from now. That's why a move from right to left is so significant and shows the coaches' confidence in Nicks.

"That's the blind side of the quarterback," he said.

It's also the NFL's money position, as author Michael Lewis points out in his book "The Blind Side." If you're interested in gaining insight into the West Coast offense, not just left tackle, the Lewis book would make for good summer reading. In fact, it would make for good summer reading, anyway.

In telling the story of Michael Oher, now a junior (and left tackle) at Mississippi, Lewis traces the increased importance of protecting the quarterback's blind side from the assault of linebackers such as game-changing former New York Giants' Hall of Famer Lawrence Taylor. Lewis points out, among other things, that:

- in 1997, Orlando Pace, a left offensive tackle, received the largest rookie contract in NFL history and became the St. Louis Rams' highest-paid player;
- in 2000, Baltimore Ravens' left tackle Johnathan Ogden signed a contract worth more than that of any NFL quarterback, \$44 million over six years;
- by 2004, the five highest-paid left tackles in the NFL

earned nearly \$3 million a year more than the highest-paid right tackles;

● and by 2005, starting left tackles in the NFL were paid more, on average, than players at any other position except quarterback, with the five highest-paid left tackles earning an average of \$7.25 million annually, compared to the top five quarterbacks' \$11.9 million.

This year's NFL Draft provided further evidence of the importance of left tackles. Joe Thomas, who played as a collegian at Wisconsin, was the third player selected, following quarterback JaMarcus Russell and wide receiver Calvin Johnson. The Cleveland Browns bypassed quarterback Brady Quinn, a surprise move, and picked the 6-6, 311-pound Thomas, subsequently drafting Quinn, too.

Cornhusker offensive line coach Dennis Wagner said during the spring that Nicks has NFL draft potential. But first, he must show that the coaches' confidence in him is justified.

"Initially, that's where we wanted him," Wagner said, referring to left tackle. "But as he learned the offense, he became the third tackle, and we played him on either side."

Even though Nicks played left tackle at Hartnell College in his hometown of Salinas, Calif., he spent his first collegiate season playing nose tackle at New Mexico State. Plus, junior college transfers need time to adjust, particularly if they can't enroll at mid-term and go through spring practice. As a result, "it took him through mid-season to figure out what he was supposed to do," said Wagner.

Nicks is among several players who need to step up if the Cornhuskers are to take another step forward in Bill Callahan's fourth season as coach. Nose tackle Ndamukong Suh and open side end Barry Turner are among those on defense, for example, as the front four has to be rebuilt.

The competition at quarterback involving Sam Keller and Joe Ganz attracted much of the attention during the spring, of course, and it will continue to be a fan focus in training camp. Regardless of who earns the job, however, he'll need blind side protection while going through progressions.

That protection isn't solely the left tackle's responsibility, of course. But left tackle is the place to start, which is why it has become the money position. "I guess I already knew," Nicks said.

"But Coach reiterated that a little bit." ■

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 25 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.



Carl Nicks started twice on the right side late last season.



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Confident In Columbia

Veteran quarterback says Tigers have the talent to fulfill lofty expectations



**Curt
McKEEVER**

WILL THE BIG 12 CONFERENCE North Division be won on the first October Saturday of league play? A lot of forecasters, most notably ESPN's Kirk Herbstreit, seem to be leaning that way.

Their logic is simple. On Oct. 6, the two favorites — Nebraska and Missouri — square off in Columbia, Mo.

The Tigers have the top veteran quarterback in the league — Chase Daniel — to steer a loaded offense. The Huskers have the most talented newcomer at that position — Arizona State transfer Sam Keller (although he hasn't officially been given the starting job).

If Mizzou wins its third straight battle in Columbia against NU, it still has seven league games left. But what the early predictions are indicating is that, thereafter, the teams' Big 12 schedules kind of cancel each other out.

Missouri, which has an open date before playing host to the Huskers, goes to Oklahoma. Nebraska is at Texas. You figure those are losses, right?

Both teams play at Colorado. Nebraska also goes to Kansas (which gave up a home game against Missouri to play in Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium), while the Tigers are at Kansas State. Those also seem to be similar challenges.

Thus, the team that holds up best at home figures to have the edge. And Herbstreit figures the Tigers will keep their end of the bargain on Oct. 6.

"Bring on the expectations," Daniel said of Herbstreit picking Mizzou in the Big 12 North. "I'm more than willing to take them on my shoulders. And I know this team is."

His comments came after he watched most of the Tigers' final spring competition — one where the offense and defense could earn points, and the offense walked away with a 72-27 edge. Daniel took just 15 snaps, but completed eight of 11 passes for 95 yards and a 10-yard score to Will Franklin.

In three spring scrimmages, Daniel, who heads into his junior season owning most of Missouri's passing and total-offense records, was 47-for-59 for 697 yards, eight touchdowns and two interceptions in three spring scrimmages.

Missouri has plenty of other familiar offensive weapons. The tight end tandem of Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman might be the best in the country. Franklin leads a proven corps of receivers, and tailbacks Tony Temple and Marcus Woods figure to make the ground game more potent.

Last year — which ended with a 39-38 loss to Oregon State in the Sun Bowl — Daniel passed for a school-record 3,527 yards and 28 touchdowns. Yes, he had five total interceptions in losses to Oklahoma and NU. But his job this season should be made easier by the fact he'll have seven other

returning offensive starters around him.

"I just have to throw to these guys and let them take it 50 yards down the field," he told the Lincoln Journal Star in early May. "We have that kind of talent on offense."

Nebraska can counter with Keller, the fans' favorite to succeed Big 12 offensive player of the year Zac Taylor. Keller opened the 2005 season by throwing for 16 touchdowns in four games.

Bill Callahan maintains he'll wait until the second or third week of fall camp to separate Keller and Joe Ganz. But come Oct. 6, expect to see two guys, who have lit things up on the big stage before, to be leading the pivotal battle in Columbia.

Of course, Nebraska will have eight of those in its quest for a second straight North crown. And here's an appetizer on what the Huskers can expect to face.

- **Iowa State:** Former Auburn and Texas defensive coordinator Gene Chizik takes over the Cyclones and will lean heavily on senior quarterback Bret Meyer and 11 junior college transfers.

- **Missouri:** Daniel finished fifth nationally in total offense last season, averaging 300.5 yards. The Tigers need to improve a rushing defense that last season ranked 11th in Big 12 games.

- **Oklahoma State:** Bobby Reid and Zac Robinson are set to share time at quarterback, and whoever is under center will have talented wideout Adarius Bowman and running back Dantrell Savage to distribute the ball to. OSU's big concern is replacing its top three interior defensive linemen.

- **Texas A&M:** The Aggies got throttled by California 45-10 in the Holiday Bowl, dampening an otherwise inspiring season in which they were in every game prior to the finale. Now, they have 17 starters back.

- **Texas:** The Longhorns went 10-3 and beat Iowa 26-24 in the Alamo Bowl in Year 1 post-Vince Young. Now, they have 16 starters back, and if they can keep quarterback Colt McCoy in the saddle (they lost twice after he was hurt early in the game against Kansas State) they should emerge in the national championship hunt again.

- **Kansas:** Sophomore Todd Reesing is pushing returning starter Kerry Meier at quarterback. Maybe that's why first-year offensive coordinator Ed Warinner is restructuring KU's passing game?

- **Kansas State:** The Wildcats have 18 starters back from the team that lost to Rutgers 37-10 in the Texas Bowl, but in the spring game, quarterback Josh Freeman's team totaled zero yards of offense (44 passing, minus-44 rushing). A year after K-State finished last in the league in red-zone efficiency (21 scores in 32 trips) there could be more questions with the unit up front.

- **Colorado:** The coach's son, redshirt freshman Cody Hawkins, looks like he'll be starting behind center. Last year's quarterback, Bernard Jackson, spent spring practice being used at running back, wideout and on returns. Hawkins was 12-of-20 passing for 119 yards with a TD and an interception in CU's spring game. ■

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for baseball. Curt can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com

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HOW THEY

We asked members of the Nebraska media for their predictions entering the 2007 season. Here is how they predict Nebraska will finish and why:

John Bishop KLIN Radio (Lincoln)

8-5 — For the record, let me state that in the prior two seasons, I have only been off by one game in predicting the season record. Last year being a "perfect" 9-5. With that said, here's how I see 2007. There is talent on the D-line, but it's all new. Once again, Mr. Bowman watches at least part of this season from the sidelines. And unless the quarterback is named "Manning," it's usually a bumpy transition to a new starting QB. The key game is at Wake Forest. If NU can play well against a tough nonconference opponent on the road, then you might see a couple from my "loss" column shift to the win column — and another Big 12 Championship game appearance. Please don't shoot the messenger — this will be the true test, if I have the vision to see the future. Wins: (8) Nevada, Ball State, Iowa State, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M, Kansas State, Colorado, Bowl Game. Losses: (5) Wake Forest, USC, Missouri, Texas, Kansas

Sean Callahan HuskersIllustrated.com

10-4 — This season will ultimately be defined on how Nebraska does in games against USC, Wake Forest, Texas and the Big 12 Championship game. The last two years, I've nailed Nebraska's Big 12 finish and Bowl game. This year, I see Nebraska going 9-3 in the regular season, losing to USC and Texas, and there will be one more loss in there you just can't predict. I think this will be the best offense Bill Callahan has had in Lincoln, but the defensive line's inexperience may hurt NU in the big games. I see Nebraska losing to Oklahoma in the Big 12 title game in a very tight contest. If the Huskers do not win the Big 12 and they play in the Big 12 title game, they are almost a near lock in my opinion to go to the Gator Bowl, which must take a Big 12 team two of the next three years. I think Nebraska finishes strong in the Gator Bowl, and Callahan will get his first 10-win season at NU.

Terry Douglass Grand Island Independent

10-3 — The opportunity to take another step forward, at least record-wise, exists for Nebraska if Sam Keller's one-year run at quarterback proves to be a productive one. Playing at 2006 BCS qualifier Wake Forest and hosting likely preseason No. 1 Southern California, the Cornhuskers will do well to be 3-1 in nonconference play. NU's Oct. 6 game at Missouri could very well be the battle for the North Division title. Give the nod to the Tigers at home, and Nebraska finishes 10-3, missing the Big 12 Championship game but finishing with a bowl victory.

Lane Grindle Husker Sports Network

11-3 — The Huskers have playmakers on offense with Marlon Lucky and Sam Keller as the headlining acts. The key offensively is the line finally taking that next step and someone emerging at tight end. If those two things happen, then this offense could be scary good. Defensively, Nebraska is more talented up front than people are giving it credit for, but will the inexperience eventually catch up to the D-line? The road game at Missouri may be the most important of the year.

Bob Hamar The Grand Island Independent

10-4 — I foresee a regular season similar to last year's. I think NU will be 2-0 heading into the USC game on Sept. 15, but you can't count out a very good Wake Forest team on the road. The Huskers also face a tough road game at Missouri and an even tougher one at Texas. I'll go with a 9-3 regular season, a loss in the Big 12 Championship game and a bowl game win for a final 10-4 record.

Ken Hambleton Lincoln Journal Star

7-6 — Well, another year and another new quarterback who hasn't been hit in a long time. A rebuilt offensive line and a search for defensive backs who can cover. Losses to Texas, USC, Missouri, Wake Forest, Texas A&M and a wild-card loss makes for a six-loss season. It would be nice to predict that the defense is going to be great, the offense a smooth-running machine. It would be nice to be 6-foot-4 and 23-years-old.

Rich Kaipust Omaha World-Herald

9-4 — October is a mine field with two tough trips (Missouri, Texas) and two dangerous home games (Oklahoma State, Texas A&M). Undecided on if a Big 12 North title is again in the cards, because Mizzou arguably has the clearer path to San Antonio.

Katelyn Kerkhove Daily Nebraskan

8-5 — The Huskers will struggle on the road this year, losing four of five (regular-season) away games because of an inexperienced defensive line and a new quarterback. While the experienced receiving corps will help, the mix-up of several other positions is threatening to a season that includes games against Texas and Wake Forest away, as well as a rematch with USC in Lincoln. I don't think they'll win a bowl game.

Kevin Kugler 1620 The Zone (Omaha)

9-4 — Nebraska will start 2-0, winning in a closer than expected game at Wake Forest to go to 2-0. Nebraska will find points hard to come by against USC and fall at home to the Trojans. Following wins against Ball State and Iowa

SEE 2007

State, Missouri will get the upper hand in the North Division with a win in Columbia. Nebraska will exact revenge against Oklahoma State, but lose a stunner at home to Texas A&M, following that up with a loss at Texas. The Huskers will regroup, beating Kansas, Kansas State and Colorado to end the regular season 8-4 (5-3 in Big 12). Following a postseason victory in the bowl game, Nebraska will end Bill Callahan's fourth season at 9-4.

Randy Lee
Husker Sports Network

10-4 — After coming close to having an exceptional year in 2006, a deep, experienced and talented offensive line and a room full of outstanding linebackers will need to put it all together as the Huskers line up against a very challenging 2007 schedule. If Marlon Lucky stays healthy and Cody Glenn can bounce back from his foot injury, I'm confident Nebraska's ground game can finish in the Top 10 nationally. Zack Bowman's second knee injury is a severe blow to the secondary, and some young players must step up and make major contributions. I'm confident Nebraska's offense will be more consistent as the Huskers win the North Division for the second consecutive year and finish 10-4.

Ed Littler
KHAS TV (Hastings)

10-4 — I predict Nebraska to be 10-4, which it should have been last season if for not blowing the Cotton Bowl, giving it away. They'll win the bowl game this year but lose in the regular season to USC, at Missouri, at Texas and once again in the Big 12 title game to Oklahoma, which will edge Texas for the South title.

Lon Nichols
KLKN TV (Lincoln)

9-4 — They'll lose a defensive struggle at Wake and fall at home to USC. After winning two straight, they lose to the Big 12 North champion Missouri Tigers. The only other loss of the season comes at Austin. In a preview of the 2008 game, the Big Red end the season with a Sun Bowl victory over Virginia Tech.

Kent Pavelka
Husker Sports Network

11-3 — I see Nebraska being good enough to get back to the Big 12 Championship game and perhaps even win it. Before San Antonio, the Huskers will likely drop games to one nonconference opponent, one of the South Division opponents, and sweep the still under-achieving North Division. A victory in the conference title game will be followed a loss in a BCS bowl game. A loss in the league championship game will be followed by a victory in a non-BCS bowl. Same record either way.

Jim Rose
Husker Sports Network

10-2 (North Division champs) — Post Season: Big

12 Title game/January bowl game. Bill C's careful rebuilding of the Nebraska offense is ready for the bright lights. He has 11 O-linemen who can block anybody in the league, six gifted WRs, a "free agent" QB and, more importantly, depth and competition at each position. The Blackshirts lost a lot up front but sport quick, aggressive, smart LBs and more options to put pressure on the opposing QB. That should help the developing secondary. The USC match in Lincoln could be the Big Red's coming out party!

Brian Rosenthal
Lincoln Journal Star

9-5 — Some say Nebraska needs a breakthrough victory in year four of the Callahan era, and the schedule certainly presents some opportunities — USC, Texas, Big 12 title game. However, the schedule, as it did last year, also presents opportunities for a couple of slip-ups. Whether Nebraska can better manage those games will truly determine whether year four is a real success.

Mike'l Severe
1620 The Zone (Omaha)

9-4 — Nevada 34-17 W, Wake Forest 27-24 L, USC 31-17 L, Ball State 42-0 W, Iowa State 31-3 W, Missouri 29-26 L, Oklahoma State 31-26 W, Texas A&M 19-16 L, Texas 29-27 W, Kansas 30-28 W, Kansas State 45-10 W, Colorado 34-12 W. The Huskers get out to a slow start losing two out of first three. Wake Forest's misdirection offense causes the Huskers' over-pursuing defense problems. USC has too much talent on defense, slowing Keller and shutting down the running game. The close loss at Missouri costs NU the North title. An 8-4 finish puts the Huskers in the Gator Bowl or the Alamo Bowl.

Kevin Sjuts
KOLN TV (Lincoln)

12-2 — Bill Callahan gets the signature win he's been waiting for, which leads him to another signature . . . a contract extension. The Huskers' season will be highlighted by a win over USC, part of a perfect start that gets Husker Nation mesmerized by the Sam Keller Show. Thanks to the incredible progress on the offensive line, the Huskers are able to boast their second straight Big 12 Offensive Player of Year in Keller. The Golden Arm leads NU to a Big 12 title and a party in the desert, which would be a bittersweet return to Arizona for you-know-who.

Jon Wofford
KLKN TV (Lincoln)

9-5 — The Huskers lose at Wake, vs. USC, at Missouri and at Texas. In spite of the setback in Columbia, the Big Red still wins the North and finishes the regular season at 8-4. Nebraska loses to Texas in the Big 12 Championship. Then it's off to San Diego for a Holiday Bowl match-up against Arizona State (Sam Keller's former team). Keller lights it up and NU beats the Sun Devils to cap off a 9-5 season. ■



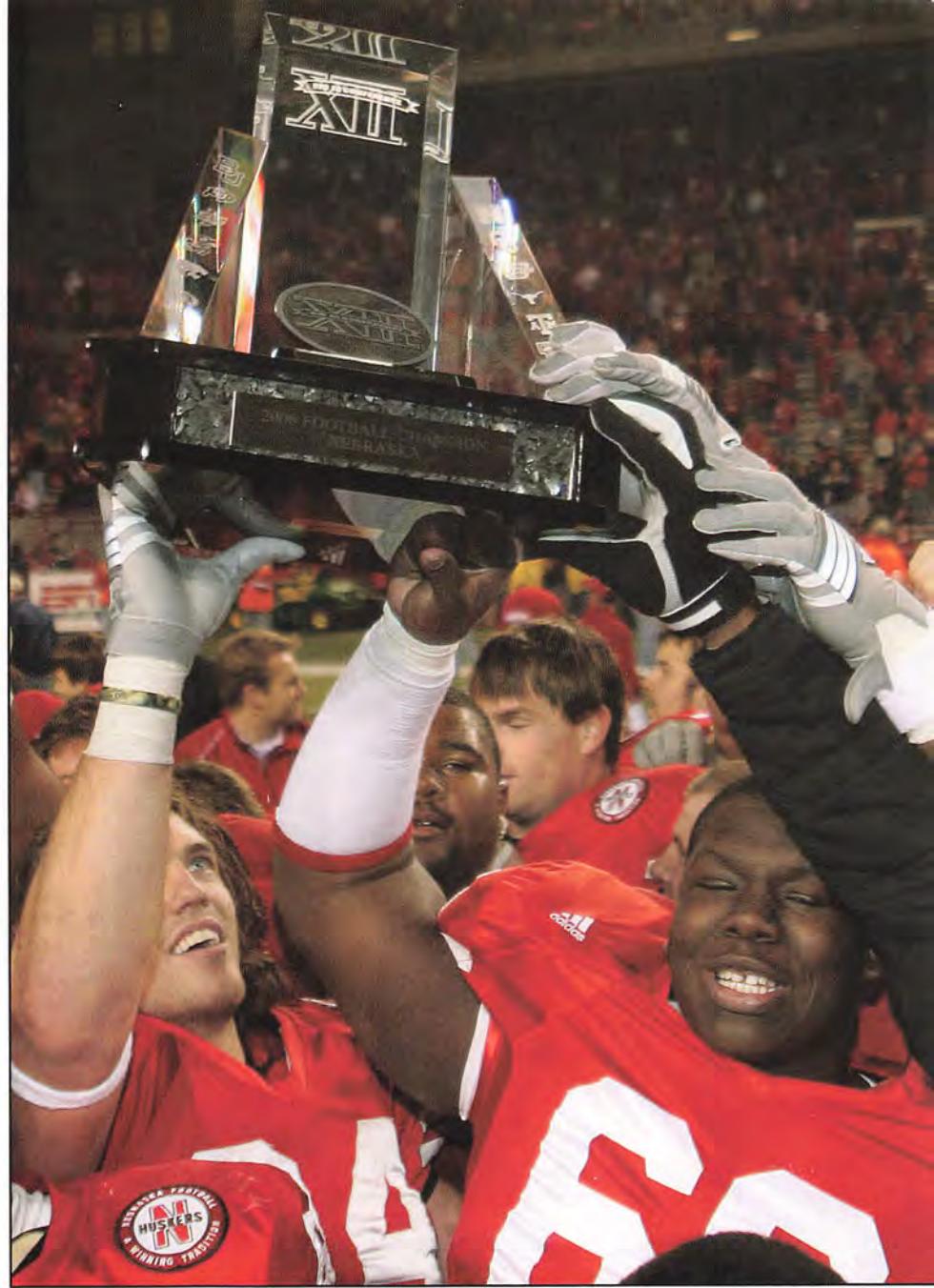
71st AT&T Cotton Bowl Classic

What's Next?

After winning the Big 12 North and a near miss in the Cotton Bowl, can the Huskers take the next step?

By MIKE BABCOCK

Photos By SCOTT BRUHN



Considering the extent of the changes, particularly on offense, Nebraska has made significant strides during Bill Callahan's three seasons as head coach. Nowhere is that better reflected than in the Cornhuskers' 965 plays from scrimmage last season, 554 rushes and 411 passes.

"That's a ton of plays," Callahan said.

It was the most in Division I-A, in fact. Only seven other teams ran as many as 900 plays, and though some of the others did so in fewer games (Oregon ran 958 plays in 13 games), the number is instructive. "It tells you we're moving the chains," said Callahan. "It means the system is working.

"The West Coast offense is a ball-control offense, you know, where you're trying to achieve first-and-10s. It's pretty evident you're doing a good job when you look at the numbers."

At the risk of citing too many, here are two more. Nebraska ranked fifth nationally in time of possession (Texas A&M was first) and 17th in third-down conversion percentage.

By converting in third-down situations, "you're staying

normal in your down and distance. You're not getting backed up in your down and distance," Callahan said. "That's huge."

Such numbers are even more significant when compared to those in 2005. Nebraska ranked No. 101 in third-down conversion percentage, for example, successful only a third of the time.

As for his first season at Nebraska, in 2004, "we were horrendous," said Callahan.

The Cornhuskers' ability to convert on third down, to move the chains, was reflected in the fact that they improved from 96th nationally in total offense in 2005 to 14th last season. They averaged 414.6 yards per game, behind only Texas Tech (448.8) and Missouri (425.6) in the conference.

The bottom line, of course, is scoring. Third-down conversions and total yardage ultimately are of little value if an offense can't close the deal. And Nebraska improved dramatically in that area as well, ranking 17th in the nation in scoring, compared to 67th the previous season.

The Cornhuskers scored 59 touchdowns compared to 34 in 2005 and 37 in 2004.

And "I think a little of that gets skewed because we played



I-back Marlon Lucky finished strong, netting 88 yards rushing and 67 receiving against Auburn in the Cotton Bowl.

some really stout defenses in the Big 12 championship and in the bowl game," said Callahan. Though they ran more plays and gained more yards than either Oklahoma or Auburn, they managed only three touchdowns in the two games.

On the positive side, the defense finished the season strong, particularly against the run. Oklahoma managed a net of 42 yards on 28 carries, Auburn a net of 67 yards on 35 carries.

In any case, red-zone efficiency, and by extension points, is the most important number on offense, and Nebraska ranked second in the Big 12 to Oklahoma in that category, scoring points on 86.3 percent of its opportunities. And it led the conference in red-zone touchdowns with 41.

"You know how hard it is to make yards in the red zone? Those are tough yards, man. Those are tough, tough yards," Callahan said, adding that red-zone efficiency shows "guys are understanding the scoring element. They have a feel for the system. They know where to be."

Red-zone efficiency shows players are making good decisions, he said,

"because decision-making is as much the receiver's responsibility as the quarterback's. That tells me we're all on the same page. We're minimizing mistakes. We're taking advantage of opportunities, and we're improving.

"And you can sell that to your football team. You can sell the incremental improvement."

With a few notable exceptions such as pass defense, which needs to be significantly better than it was in 2006, improving slightly or even maintaining probably would be sufficient on both sides of the ball as the Cornhuskers attempt to take another step forward in Callahan's fourth season.

That step presumably would include a statement victory or two, preferably against a Top-10 opponent, something that almost occurred last season against Texas. The Longhorns brought a No. 5 national ranking to Memorial Stadium and barely escaped, winning 22-20.

Nebraska lost to three other Top-10 teams last season — USC (No. 4), Oklahoma (No. 8) and Auburn (No. 10). The Cornhuskers were competitive in each of the games. But com-

petitive isn't enough. They need what has been described as, for lack of a better term, a "breakthrough" victory. "Absolutely," defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove said. "That's how programs take the next step."

Nebraska's last victory against a Top-10 opponent was in late October of 2001, when it defeated No. 2-ranked Oklahoma 20-10 at Memorial Stadium. And the Cornhuskers were ranked No. 3.

Since then Nebraska has lost seven games against teams ranked in the Associated Press Top 10, the four last seasons, and games against No. 2-ranked Oklahoma (30-3) in Callahan's first season as coach, No. 7 Texas (27-24) in the 2002 regular season and No. 1 Miami (37-14) in the 2002 Rose Bowl.

In addition, the Cornhuskers haven't been ranked in the AP Top 10 since the week of Oct. 11, 2003. They were No. 10 when they traveled to Columbia, Mo., and lost to Missouri 41-24. The highest they've been ranked since then was No. 12, two weeks later, before a 31-7 loss at Texas.

Nebraska's first appearance in the

AP rankings under Callahan came at the end of his second season, No. 24, following the Alamo Bowl victory against Michigan. The Cornhuskers' climbed to No. 17 (No. 16 in the coaches' poll) in mid-October last season, before the Texas loss.

The first priority, however, is winning the Big 12 championship, something over which Nebraska has control. And for that opportunity, it has to repeat as the North Division champion.

"It all starts within your own division and doing the best you can to be as productive as you can in your own division," Callahan said. "I just look at where we're at."

The conference record has improved each season because of success on the road. Nebraska was 3-1 on the road last season, its only loss coming at Oklahoma State. "So we're making strides to become a better football team, consistently, year in and year out," said Callahan. "I'm not a stat freak, but I'm just telling you if you study it, the numbers validate where you're at."

He has shown the players those numbers. "That's progress," he said. "It's not a three-ring circus out there. Guys understand the system and are executing it better. It shows a real profile."

STRENGTHS

Start with the wide receivers on offense and the linebackers on defense. Both position areas are deep and experienced. Because of that, they are expected to provide leadership, taking over that role from veterans such as Zac Taylor, Dane Todd, Adam Carricker, Stewart Bradley and Jay Moore.

"I think it's on the linebackers' shoulders to get this defense going and to get this defense into a unit, not just 11 guys," senior middle linebacker Corey McKeon said in the spring.

"If there's something going wrong, he's (Callahan) not looking at Coach Coz (Cosgrove) or any of the coaches. He's looking at us. It's a big responsibility." But one they can handle.

Bradley, the team's leading tackler in 2006, is the only linebacker missing. With McKeon flanked by Bo Ruud, who made a smooth transition from the weakside to the strongside in the spring, and Steve Octavien, with Lance Brandenburgh like a fourth starter. All four are seniors.

In addition, Phillip Dillard, another proven player, returns after being sidelined by injury.

All of the wide receivers are back as well as all of the tight ends except Matt Herian. Plus, both of those position areas will be bolstered by young players. So whoever emerges from the quarterback competition should have plenty of choices when he drops and sets up to throw the ball.

Terrence Nunn and Maurice Purify were the top two receivers last season, and Nate Swift was the leading receiver in 2005, with 45 catches, third-most in school history.

The offensive line is beginning to look the way a Callahan line is supposed to look, big, thick and square, anchored by senior Brett Byford and

versatile junior Matt Slauson, who can play (and has played) tackle as well as guard, where he figures to settle in, at least for the time being.

QUESTION MARKS

Sam Keller or Joe Ganz? That question will be answered a couple of weeks into preseason practice. That it wasn't answered during the spring didn't concern Callahan. In fact, that was a positive, he said, because Keller and Ganz will continue to compete in their off-season preparation.

"That's been our posture since I've been here, trying to find players that will compete on a consistent basis," said Callahan. "So I think it provides for a great atmosphere of competition."



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Whoever earns the job will have his work cut out for him. Nebraska ranked 23rd in pass offense last season, compared to 54th in 2005 and 87th in 2004, and Zac Taylor was a significant reason.

The secondary, which would benefit from the return of Zack Bowman, will be a focus. The pass defense has to improve after ranking 79th nationally last season. "We've gone to considerable lengths of research to try to improve our coverage schematics and really protect ourselves against the pass with better coverage, better pass rush . . . whatever we can do to improve team pass defense," Callahan said.

That doesn't fall on the secondary alone. Effective defense, whether against the pass or the run, begins up front. And that's the most significant question on defense, if not the team. The entire front four must be replaced, no small task given those who have departed, Ola Dagunduro and Barry Cryer as well as NFL draftees Adam Carricker and Jay Moore.

A place-kicker has to step up following the surprise departure of Jordan Congdon, and special-teams play has to continue to improve, especially kickoffs and kickoff returns.

On both sides of the ball, as always, "the whole key is to stay healthy," said defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove. "And we haven't done that, haven't done that."

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Marlon Lucky scored a touchdown in a spring scrimmage that earned raves from coaches and players alike. The junior I-back ran a draw play and "cut it out," said quarterback Joe Ganz.

Sophomore strong safety Rickey Thenarse "was coming, flying, overpursuing, and Marlon just stuck him to the outside," Ganz said. "Rickey went right by him, and Marlon scored."

No disrespect, but the play made Thenarse's knees "knock together," said Ganz, who, predictably enough, planned to "give it to Rickey about it" in the locker room afterward.

A healthy and mentally focused Lucky could be a difference-maker in Callahan's offense, with the ability to catch out of the backfield as well as run, however he gets the ball.

Even spreading around the ball

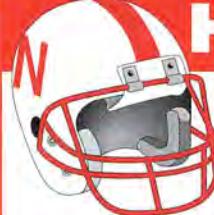
with an I-back committee, Lucky could be a 1,000-yard ball carrier. He rushed for 728 yards on 141 carries last season, which means, given his per-carry average, he would have gained more than 1,000 by carrying, on average, just five more times a game.

The knee injury that sent him to the locker room near the end of the Spring Game wasn't serious, and he reportedly smiled a lot more during practice in the spring and seemed to be enjoying himself.

In addition to being happier, bigger and stronger, he's experienced.

"Marlon looks really good," quarterback Sam Keller said late in the spring. "It looks to me like he's making guys miss on the second and third level. He's very athletic. Marlon's a slasher."

"He's a slashing running back. He finds the hole. He has good vision I'm not really a running back expert, but, you know, you see the kind of runs he can make and it's pretty impressive." ■



HUSKERS AT A GLANCE

PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

2007 SCHEDULE

1st
NORTH DIVISION

Sept. 1	Nevada (ABC)	2:30
Sept. 8	@Wake Forest (ESPN)	11:00
Sept. 15	USC (ABC)	7:00
Sept. 22	Ball State	TBA
Sept. 29	Iowa State	TBA
Oct. 6	@Missouri	TBA
Oct. 13	Oklahoma St. (Homecoming)	TBA
Oct. 20	Texas A&M	TBA
Oct. 27	@Texas	TBA
Nov. 3	@Kansas	TBA
Nov. 10	Kansas State	TBA
Nov. 23	@Colorado (ABC)	11:00

(Times are subject to change and are Central)

2006 RECORD: 9-5
CONFERENCE RECORD: 6-2

S 2	Louisiana Tech	W, 49-10
S 9	Nicholls State	W, 56-7
S 16	@USC	L, 28-10
S 23	Troy	W, 56-0
S 30	Kansas	W, 39-32 (ot)
O 7	@Iowa State	W, 28-14
O 14	@Kansas State	W, 21-3
O 21	Texas	L, 22-20
O 28	@Oklahoma St.	L, 41-29
N 4	Missouri	W, 34-20
N 11	@Texas A&M	W, 28-27
N 24	Colorado	W, 37-14
D 2	*Oklahoma	L, 21-7
D 28	**Auburn	L, 17-14
*Big 12 Championship, Kansas City		
**Cotton Bowl, Dallas		

Scouting reports for other Big 12 schools, Page 75

PROJECTED TWO-DEEPS

WRX	16	MAURICE PURIFY*	6-4	220	Sr.	DE(O)99	Barry Turner**	6-3	250	Jr.
	87	Nate Swift**	6-2	200	Jr.		88 Clayton Sievers**	6-4	245	Jr.
LT	77	Carl Nicks*	6-5	300	Sr.	NT	77 Ndamukong Suh*	6-4	305	So.
LG	67	Jacob Hickman*	6-4	285	So.	96	Brandon Johnson*	6-3	315	Sr.
	62	ANDY CHRISTENSEN*	6-3	300	Jr.	DT	43 Ty Steinkuhler**	6-3	285	Jr.
	68	Keith Williams	6-5	310	RFr.		56 Shukree Barfield	6-4	310	Jr.
C	59	BRETT BYFORD*	6-3	305	Jr.	DE(B)98	Zach Potter**	6-7	280	Jr.
	75	Victory Haines	6-7	290	Sr.		95 Pierre Allen	6-5	265	RFr.
RG	70	MATT SLAUSON**	6-5	335	Jr.	SLB	51 BO RUUD***	6-3	235	Sr.
	61	MIKE HUFF**	6-4	300	Jr.		38 Kyle Moore	6-2	225	RFr.
RT	76	Lydon Murtha*	6-7	315	So.	MLB	40 COREY MCKEON**	6-1	225	Sr.
	73	D.J. Jones	6-5	310	RFr.		38 Phillip Dillard*	6-1	250	So.
TE	85	J.B. PHILLIPS***	6-3	245	Sr.	WLB	15 Steve Octavien*	6-0	240	Sr.
	81	Josh Mueller***	6-5	265	Sr.		40 Lance Brandenburgh***	6-1	230	Sr.
WRZ	83	TERRENCE NUNN***	6-0	190	Sr.	LCB	2 CORTNEY GRIXBY***	5-9	170	Sr.
	7	Frantz Hardy**	6-1	190	Sr.		5 Armando Murillo	6-0	195	Jr.
OB	5	Sam Keller	6-4	230	Sr.	FS	30 TIERRE GREEN***	6-1	200	Sr.
	8	Joe Ganz*	6-1	200	Jr.		9 Bryan Wilson*	6-1	205	Sr.
IB	20	Marlon Lucky**	6-0	210	Jr.	SS	4 Larry Asante	6-1	210	So.
	34	Cody Glenn**	6-0	230	Jr.		3 Rickey Thenarse*	6-0	190	So.
FB	42	Matt Senske	6-3	245	Sr.	RCB	25 Andre Jones*	6-0	190	Sr.
	36	Thomas Lawson*	6-0	240	Jr.		14 Zackary Bowman*	6-2	200	Sr.

SPECIALISTS

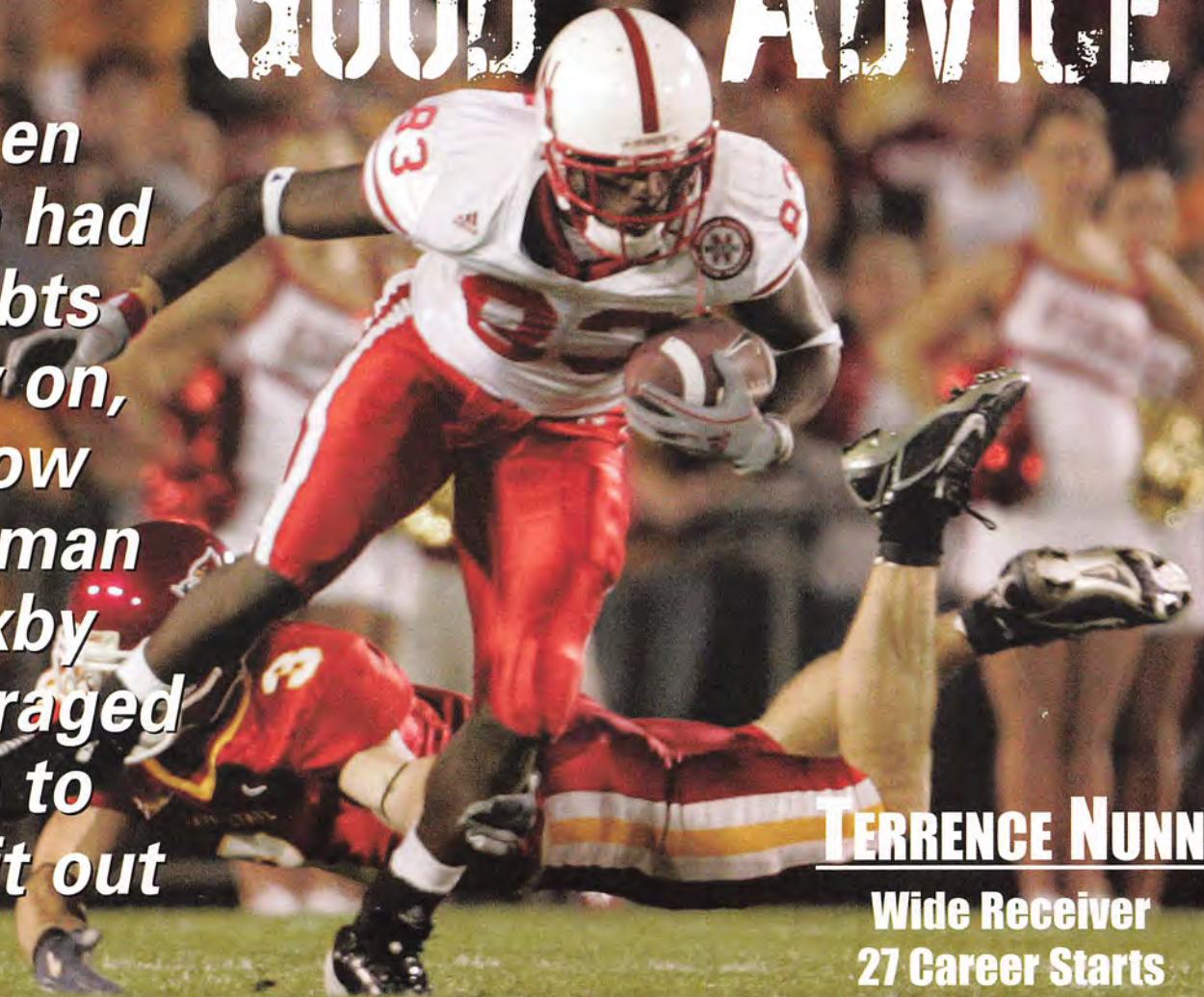
P	97	DAN TITCHENER*	6-0	200	Jr.
	91	Michael Such	6-2	205	RFr.
PK	90	Alex Henery	6-2	170	RFr.
	98	Jake Wesch**	6-1	200	Jr.
LS	82	T.J. O'Leary*	6-1	245	Jr.

NOTES

- Returning lettermen in bold
- Returning starters in CAPS
- * Letters earned

Good Advice

When Nunn had doubts early on, fellow freshman Grixby encouraged him to stick it out



TERRENCE NUNN

Wide Receiver

27 Career Starts

COVER STORY By MIKE BABCOCK

Early in training camp of his freshman season, the third practice as he remembers it, he really messed up and ran the wrong pass route, much to the displeasure of coach Bill Callahan.

"I didn't know squat," Terrence Nunn said.

The senior wide receiver sat in a small conference room in the sports information office, recounting the experience. "I was as blank as this table," he said with a laugh.

The route was simple enough. But he was confused, as freshmen often are. And when he returned to the huddle, Callahan "ripped me," said Nunn. "He ripped me bad."

Nunn wasn't used to such criticism. His high school coaches never yelled at him. They had no reason to yell. He was better than those around him and didn't have to concern himself with routes to get open. He had run the 100 meters in 10.6 seconds and could run away from most defensive backs.

Not that he didn't understand the importance of running crisp routes. He grew up a Jerry Rice fan and learned by

watching Rice that a good receiver has to rely on more than just speed. Rice "was never the fastest receiver in the league, but just running his routes got him open," Nunn said.

In this case, Nunn hadn't even run the right route, never mind how well he had run it. So Callahan unloaded on him, and he never got a chance to redeem himself that day.

After the practice, Nunn headed back to his dorm room in Smith Hall and called his parents in Houston. He told them he was ready to pack up and come home.

They told him to stick it out, and everything would be fine.

He remembers getting the same advice from fellow freshman Cortney Grixby, who also lived in Smith Hall. "I was like, 'Man, he (Callahan) got me good today. I thought about going home.' He (Grixby) said, 'You've got to stick it out,' the same thing I would have said to him," Nunn said.

The two had quickly became friends, since day one according to Nunn, even though Grixby played cornerback, which meant they were constantly lining up against each other in practice. "I couldn't tell you how many times we've gone against each other since we've been here," said Nunn.

Grixby had strong Nebraska ties. He was from Omaha,

and his brother DeAntae played for the Cornhuskers, so he was familiar with the program from the inside. Nunn also was familiar with the program but from the outside, its championship tradition "back in the day."

His dad was a Nebraska football fan, enough of one that after he committed to the Cornhuskers, his dad bought a large Nebraska flag and hung it outside the family's home.

"He was very excited when I committed here," Nunn said.

Nunn committed twice, first to Frank Solich and then to Callahan, after initially changing his mind about Nebraska and committing to Wisconsin. Because of the coaching change, he wasn't certain whether the Cornhuskers were still interested. He realized they were when Callahan paid a visit.

Nebraska's new coach, just one season removed from taking the Oakland Raiders to the Super Bowl, came to Cypress Falls High School and caused quite a stir among students and teachers alike.

"That was a big deal. I was shocked," said Nunn, who had seen Callahan "a lot" on television.

"He looked the same as he did on TV," Nunn said. "I just thought he was taller."

Callahan certainly cast a large shadow after Nunn ran that wrong route in practice. But the mistake apparently didn't have a residual effect. Nunn started the opening game against Western Illinois, becoming the first Nebraska freshman on offense to start an opener since at least World War II.

In an attempt to get the best athletes on the field quickly, Callahan used eight true freshmen in his first season at Nebraska. In addition to Nunn and Grixby, Brandon Jackson, Lance Brandenburgh, Michael Keenan, Santino Panico, Beau Davis and Ryan Goodman got in at least one game. All except Keenan, Davis and Goodman earned letters, with Nunn, Grixby and Jackson seeing the most action.

Nunn played in every game, starting six, and finished the season with 16 pass receptions for 218 yards. He caught 10 of the passes, for 124 of the yards, in late-season games against Iowa State at Ames and Colorado, an indication of his increasing comfort with the offense.

By his second season, he had settled in, starting every game as the Z receiver and catching 43 passes for 495 yards

and seven touchdowns. Only four Cornhuskers had ever caught as many as 40 passes in a season prior to 2005. I-back Cory Ross also caught 43 passes that season to tie for second on the team. Nate Swift, a redshirted freshman, caught 45 passes, third-most in school history.

Once Callahan's offense was installed, school passing and receiving records were bound to be broken. And Nunn has a shot at the record for career receptions, held by Johnny Rodgers. The two-time consensus All-American and 1972 Heisman Trophy winner caught 143 passes in three seasons.

If Nunn were to equal last season's team-leading total of 42 catches, he would tie Rodgers.

"I don't really think about that," said Nunn. "Some people have brought it up before, but I don't really think about it. Would I like to (break it)? Yes. But I don't think about it."

More than breaking Rodgers' record, he would like to experience the excitement he felt after the Cornhuskers defeated Texas A&M last season to wrap up the Big 12 North Division title and after they defeated Michigan in the Alamo Bowl to finish his junior season.

He caught four passes for what were then a career-high 91 yards and two touchdowns against the Wolverines. "It was crazy," he said. "I'll never forget that."

He'll never forget the third practice of his first Callahan training camp, either.

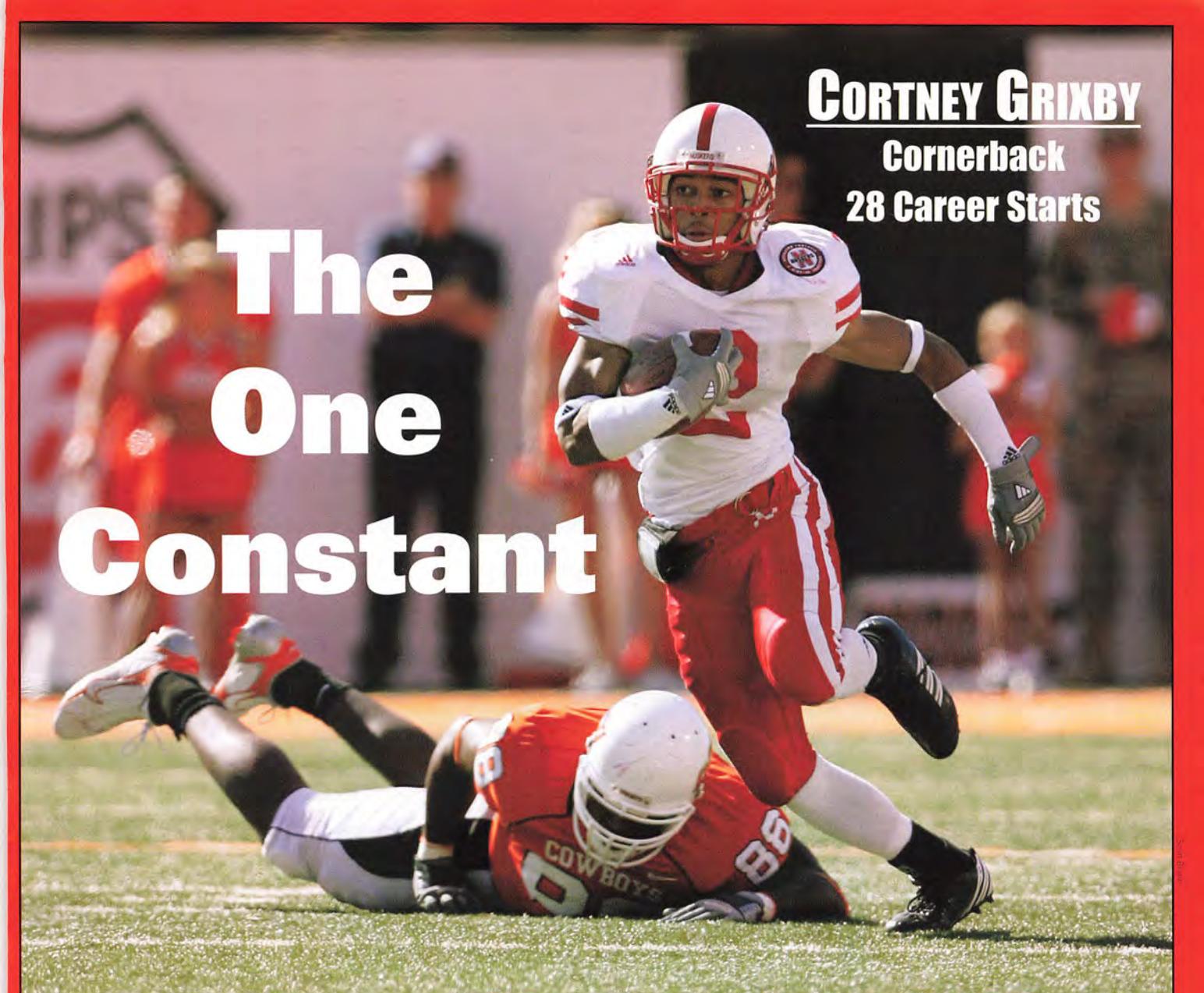
There have been other down times — every athlete goes through them — such as having the ball knocked loose after a third-down reception that would have given the Cornhuskers a first down as they tried to hold onto a 20-19 lead with 2:17 remaining against No. 5-ranked Texas last season. Nunn had the maturity, as well as the support of teammates and coaches, to handle that.

But being chewed out by Callahan just reinforced the uncertainties every freshman faces. "I thought I wasn't fast enough. I didn't think I could play," Nunn said. "When you're young, you just think everything is so negative. But you have to look at the positive side sometimes."

He learned that because his parents insisted he stay.

"I've really enjoyed my time here," he said. "It's not over." ■





CORTNEY GRIXBY

Cornerback

28 Career Starts

The One Constant

COVER STORY BY TERRY DOUGLASS

Through all the turnover and turmoil that has taken place in Nebraska's secondary over the past three seasons, Cortney Grixby has remained the one constant.

Now looking ahead to his senior season with the Cornhuskers, the cornerback from Omaha Central believes he's more prepared than ever to take ownership over not only the defensive backs, but the entire Blackshirt defense.

"I'm going into my final season, and it has gone so fast," Grixby said. "This is the last go-around, and we have a great senior class, and we all support each other, and we all have the same focus."

While Grixby has evolved to the point where he's now comfortable in saying whatever he feels needs to be said for the good of the team, his best leadership qualities are displayed quietly. They're evident by how he treats off-season workouts, how he goes hard every day in practice and prepares intently for every game.

"I'm not the rah-rah guy all the time, but I'll get in people's face if they need it," Grixby said. "I'm usually the guy who will try to lead by example — get out there and do what I can do and do it efficiently. Hopefully, the younger guys will take heed to that."

Grixby's teammates certainly know he means business. Fellow senior cornerback Andre Jones said he first realized just how badly Grixby wanted to win when he was visiting Lincoln and considering transferring to Nebraska. The two players were at a movie theater when Grixby matter-of-factly told Jones that the Huskers really needed him to join the squad.

"To have another cornerback say that, knowing that it was going to be competitive out there for spots the next year, to say that they needed me here with no envy and no jealousy in his voice, that just sold it for me," Jones said. "That's why I chose to come here. Cortney and I have been close friends since day one. I love Cortney to death."

Since that day, Jones said Grixby has done nothing to change that initial impression. At just 5-foot-9 and 170 pounds, the way Grixby competes against much larger opponents is a continual source of motivation, Jones said.

"When you see Courtney, as small as he is, hit a running back who's 225 pounds, and make the tackle, that inspires everyone else to go out and make a play," Jones said. "Everyone has always told him he's too small to play the position, and he's heard all the negatives, but Courtney just goes out there every day, and he just continues to prove people wrong."

"That just motivates me even more."

What Grixby lacks in stature, he attempts to make up for in determination and remarkable physical abilities. His combination of speed, quickness and a 39-inch vertical leap helped him lead Nebraska with 11 pass breakups last season, pushing his career total to 25, which ranks sixth on the Huskers' all-time charts.

Grixby, a starter in each of Nebraska's 26 games of the past two years, has also been a hard-nosed tackler with 53 stops last season, including 42 solo tackles to rank second on the squad. Grixby's play earned him honorable mention on the All-Big 12 Conference teams as selected by both the coaches and the Associated Press.

This season, Grixby is determined to have by far the best year of his career. He's focused on becoming a more consistent performer and has studied hours of game video in hopes of correcting past mistakes.

Grixby's determination to improve this spring was obvious to his teammates and coaches.

"Courtney is one of those guys who always wants to improve, and I think we see that almost every day," defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove said. "We're going to expect a lot from him this fall. He'll definitely be one of our leaders on defense, if not the entire team."

Grixby said the biggest improvement he made in the spring was doing a better job of "finishing at the point of attack."

"We just want to make more plays, get our hands on more footballs and be more involved in the playmaking of the defense," Grixby said. "We felt, as a secondary, that if we could've just made one more play in a lot of those close games, it could've changed the whole outcome of the game, so our focus is just to make more plays."

Nebraska is looking to improve this season after ranking

79th nationally in pass defense in 2006, allowing 215.3 yards per game. While any defensive coordinator will note that defending the pass is an 11-man proposition, Grixby said he wants to make sure the secondary does its part to improve on last year's 9-5 record.

"We've got to be more confident, more aggressive and basically just making better decisions on the field and playing a lot smarter," Grixby said. "It's a mental thing, and we need to be putting ourselves in a better position to make the plays. That's what we need to try to focus on."

The Huskers expect to have more depth in the secondary this season and hoped to have even more until Zackary Bowman suffered another knee injury in spring practice, dealing the senior corner another setback. Still, Grixby and Jones give Nebraska two experienced cornerbacks, and junior college transfer Armando Murillo also figures to be in the mix.

"It's a different situation from last year because we still have two corners coming back that actually played and started all 14 games," Grixby said of Jones and himself. "This has allowed the coaches to bring Armando along a lot faster than we've been able to bring some of the other new guys coming in."

"It has been really good for us as far as depth. It's a whole different situation than last year."

At safety, Tierre Green returns as a starter. The Huskers also have experienced secondary returnees in Ben Eisenhart, Rickey Thenarse, Bryan Wilson and Corey Young.

Jones said that with Grixby's leadership, he thinks the secondary can develop into one of the strengths of Nebraska's defense.

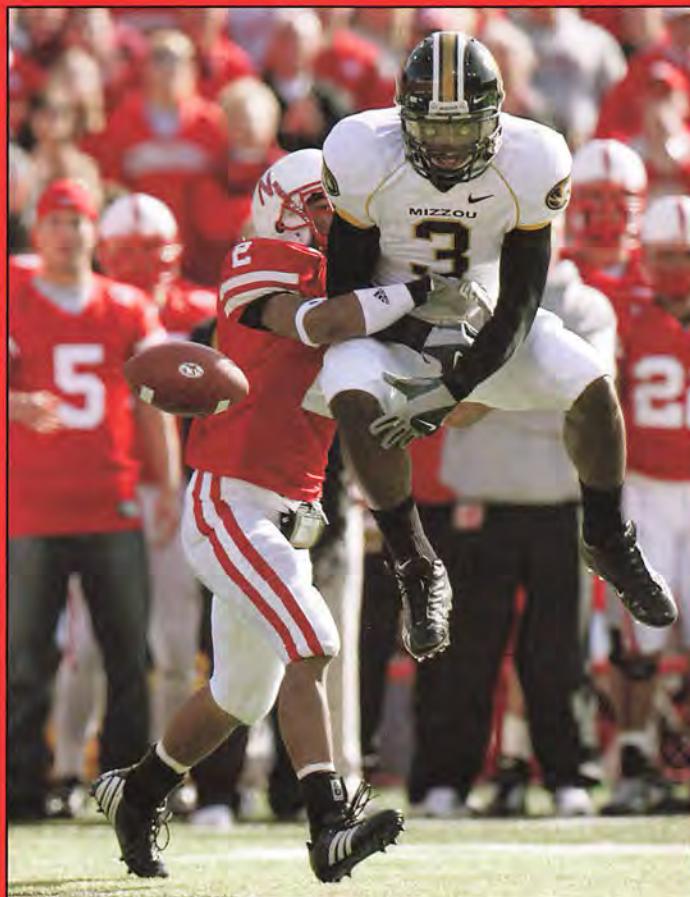
"His experience definitely helps us a lot," Jones said. "He's been through the trenches, and whenever I'm confused, his experience helps me a lot, no matter what it is."

Whether it's in a tight spot during a game or just hanging out during a road trip, Jones said Grixby has a knack for keeping the team focused, yet loose.

"Courtney's a funny, silly guy," Jones said. "He brings it out of you — you can't help but laugh — and he's fun to be around. He's a good person all the time."

Yet another way that Grixby has proven himself as a leader. In many ways, it might be the best.

"I'll do whatever it takes," Grixby said. "I just want this to be a great season." ■



Courtney Grixby has 25 pass breakups to rank sixth on the NU career chart.

Steve Bannister



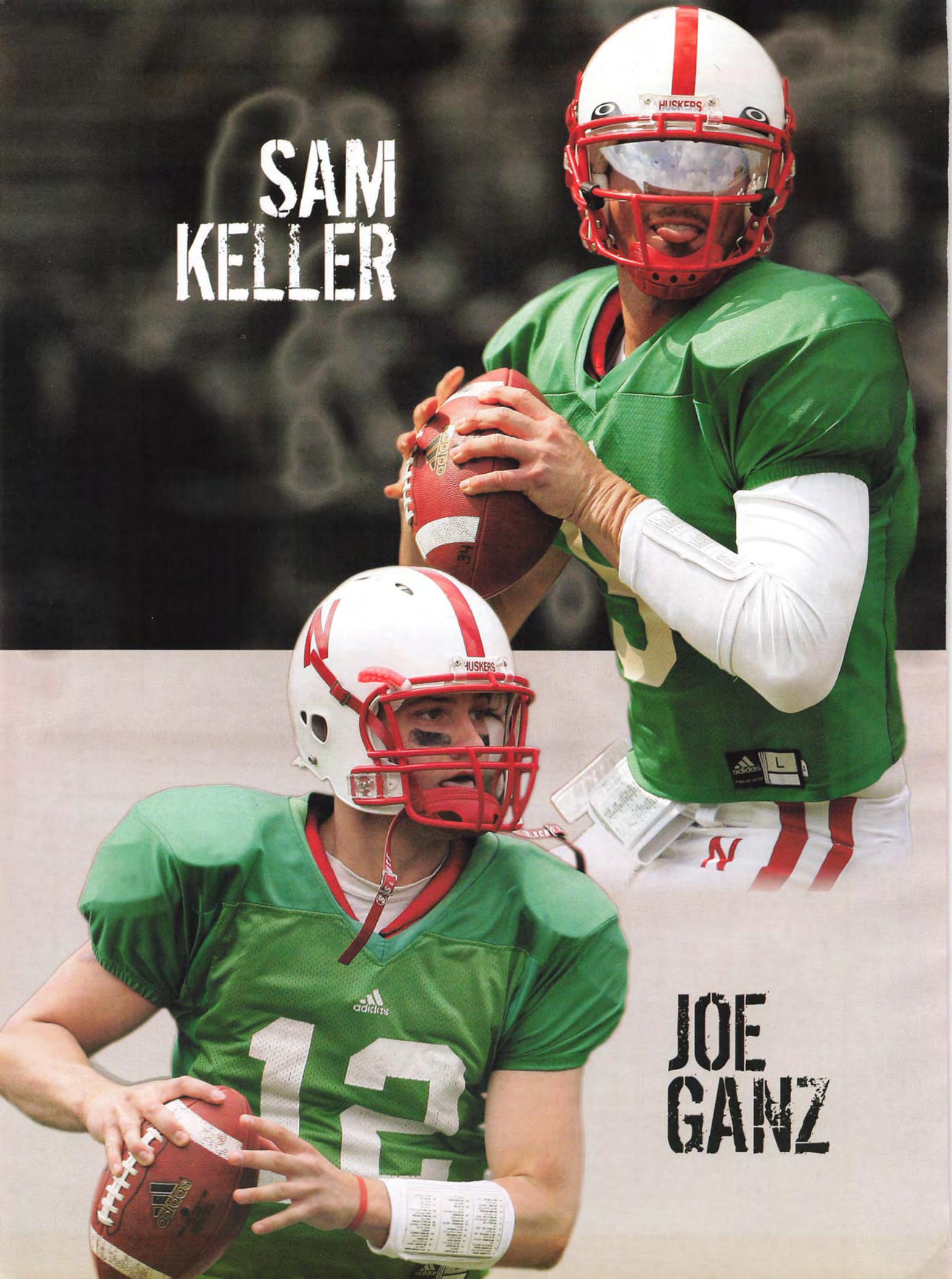
POSITION-BY-POSITION

BREAKDOWN

STORIES BY MIKE BABCOCK

PHOTOS: SCOTT BRUHN, NU SPORTS INFORMATION

SAMI KELLER



JOE GANZ

HUMILITY IMPORTANT

High school success and the attendant recruiting attention can obscure the reality of a major college football program. As a result, a little humility serves a young student-athlete well.

"You've got to be humble when you come here," Joe Ganz said.

Why? "Because, obviously, you're surrounded by great players," the junior quarterback said. "It humbles you to know that somebody out there is just as good or better than you.

"It just makes you work that much harder."

It has made him work harder, anyway. It can affect others differently. Take former Cornhusker teammate Harrison Beck for example. He struggled with that fact during his freshman year and ended up transferring, after going AWOL early in training camp prior to his sophomore season.

"It really got to him," said Ganz. "So you've just got to keep an even keel."

Ganz, one of three quarterbacks in coach Bill Callahan's first recruiting class, was responding to questions about the patience he has shown during his time at Nebraska.

He redshirted as a freshman, earning the coaches' vote as offensive scout team MVP. He was a back-up to Zac Taylor as a redshirted freshman, the No. 1 back-up through the first half of the season, though he never took a snap and eventually gave way to Beck. Then he was Taylor's top back-up last season.

Backing up the durable Taylor wasn't quite the same as, say, backing up Peyton Manning or Tom Brady. But Ganz didn't see much action, playing in five games, mostly mop-up duty.

His highlight-reel play came in the second quarter of the Colorado game when, as the holder on what turned out to be a fake field goal attempt by Jordan Congdon, he passed 29 yards to Barry Turner for a touchdown. He also threw conventional touchdown passes against Louisiana Tech and Troy.

Regardless of the circumstances, he appreciated the

AT A GLANCE

Returning

Sam Keller	6-4, 230	Sr.
Joe Ganz	6-1, 200	Jr.
Beau Davis	6-4, 180	Jr.

Incoming

Zac Lee	6-2, 210	So.
Patrick Witt	6-4, 220	Fr.

Outlook

Barring something unforeseen, the starter will be either Sam Keller or Joe Ganz, and probably Keller, although the value of three years in the system, which the determined Ganz has, can't be ignored. Coach Bill Callahan has indicated repeatedly that he won't settle on one or the other until the second or third week of training camp, after the team begins practicing in full pads.

Callahan hasn't said "one or the other," of course. He has continued to claim the competition still involves more than the two acknowledged front-runners. "There's no question," he said during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference, describing sophomore Zac Lee as the "missing link."

Lee is the transfer from San Francisco City College who couldn't practice during the spring because of a knee injury suffered during a California junior college championship game.

The injury occurred as he attempted to leap a would-be tackler.

Even though he couldn't participate in drills, Lee threw during the spring, regularly remaining after practice to work with receivers, redshirted freshman Will Henry in particular.

"The receivers ask, 'Do you want to stay and throw?' Of course I want to stay and throw, just trying to get comfortable with the guys," Lee said following a mid-spring practice.

"There's a sense of urgency just because I miss it. I miss being out there practicing."

The attention Keller has attracted since transferring from Arizona State may have overshadowed Lee's credentials. The son of former NFL quarterback and Pacific University athletic director Bob Lee completed 64 percent of his passes for more than 3,400 yards and 35 touchdowns.

Rivals.com rated him the nation's No. 1 junior college quarterback. Plus, he grayshirted, playing just one season at San Francisco City College, so he still has four years to play three.

He can, and probably will, redshirt in the fall. "I'll have that, a little safety net," he said.

As for a preference on redshirting, "I'll see what he (Callahan) says. Whatever he decides I'm sure he'll have a good reason and I'll go along with it," said Lee.

Witt, who graduated high school in Wylie, Texas, early to enroll at Nebraska and participate in spring practice, also is a redshirt candidate. However, "we're real pleased with our evaluation of him," Callahan said during the coaches' teleconference. "He's handled this installation and this offense as well as any quarterback that I've seen. So he's a real gem and we're excited to have him."

Even though Lee, Witt and junior Beau Davis are long-shots, recent history has shown that there are no certainties. Outside observers figured that Zac Taylor was brought in from junior college to push Joe Dailey until highly publicized Harrison Beck arrived. But Taylor pushed Dailey to North Carolina and started for two seasons, while Beck grew impatient as a back-up and transferred to North Carolina State.

That Keller has only one season of eligibility might be considered a negative, but not given Callahan's here-and-now approach. Besides, with Lee and Witt as well as an oral commitment from Blaine Gabbert, a top-rated high school quarterback in suburban St. Louis, the future looks bright.

5 SAM KELLER

Quarterback

6-4/230

Sr./No Letters

Danville, Calif.

Keller has one season of eligibility with the Huskers, following his much-publicized transfer from Arizona State, where he passed for 3,018 yards and 26 touchdowns in three seasons.



15 BEAU DAVIS

Quarterback

6-4/180

Jr./No Letters

Venice, Calif.

Davis played in the second half of a forgettable loss at Texas Tech as a true freshman, before red-shirting in 2005. In the 2007 Spring Game, he finished 3-for-12 passing for 4 yards.



opportunities. "I got a little taste of the field," Ganz said. "It's awesome to get to play and it motivates you to get on the field."

As for patience, even though he may have shown some, "it's killing me not to play," he said.

A reporter suggested that any show of patience by an athlete is unusual nowadays given expectations based on recruiting hype and wanted to know if Ganz considered himself a "throwback."

Perhaps, said Ganz, whose teammates sometimes refer to him as "little Jimmy McMahon."

The former Chicago Bears quarterback was probably more iconoclast than throwback, but semantics aside, the comparison is appropriate for several reasons, including the fact that Ganz grew up in south suburban Chicago, Palos Heights, and has been a Bears fan as long as he can remember.

He was born in 1985, the year McMahon led the Bears to the Super Bowl championship, and during his first two years at Nebraska, he even wore a headband the way McMahon did.

He discarded the headband, however, because "it was a little too hard to keep up. It would always come down when I put my helmet on, so I just scratched it," he said. "It was annoying."

Ganz is clearly the underdog in competition with Sam Keller for the job as Taylor's successor, from outside the team anyway. "I know that everybody thinks Sam's going to get the job," he said late in the spring. "That's fine. It really doesn't bother me. I just keep focused on what I have to do."

"I can deal with the pressure. I can deal with the out-

12 JOE GANZ

Quarterback

6-1/200

Jr./One Letter

Palos Heights, Ill.

Ganz served as Zac Taylor's top backup last season. The junior appeared in five games and completed 7-of-13 passes for 122 yards and three touchdowns, without an interception.



side."

He was comfortable from the first day of spring practice, and as confident as he's ever been. "I'm urgent relaxed," he said. "I like to keep the pace going. I like to get guys up and down in the huddle. I like to get them going. When I'm in the huddle, I know what I'm doing. I've been here a long time."

There's urgency for Keller, too, implicit in his leaving Arizona State after his junior season. He could have remained in Tempe, despite an unexpected (and in retrospect questionable) demotion on the depth chart, and been eligible for the NFL Draft, with realistic first-round potential.

But he wasn't going to sit back, he said after arriving at Nebraska in August.

If he isn't the starter, he will have accomplished little by transferring, although as he looks to the next level, exposure to Callahan's offense likely would serve him well regardless.

Callahan and quarterbacks coach Shawn Watson made no attempt to accommodate Keller. He faced a steep learning curve, with limited preparation during bowl practices after spending the fall on the scout team, and, of course, being picked by the coaches as offensive scout team MVP.

"They threw it all in there," Keller said late in the spring. "You can ask the coaches. We didn't hold anything back. Right where we left off last season is where we picked up. So the first few days, my head was spinning a little bit. But once I gathered myself, I felt very comfortable."

He had gathered himself, he said, by the fourth practice.

"All it is now is just getting polished and everything like that. Being as old as I am and playing as much football as I have, that'll be the easy part, just the little things," he said.

At times during the spring, Ganz would glance at Keller just to see how he was doing. But Watson told him before practices began that those who are constantly looking at the competition are falling behind. "So you've just got to focus on what you can control," said Ganz.

Watson's advice served him well, and will continue to do so.

"I trust my coaches," Ganz said. "Obviously, I wouldn't be here if I didn't trust them. It takes a lot of trust, but they've earned it over the last couple of years." ■

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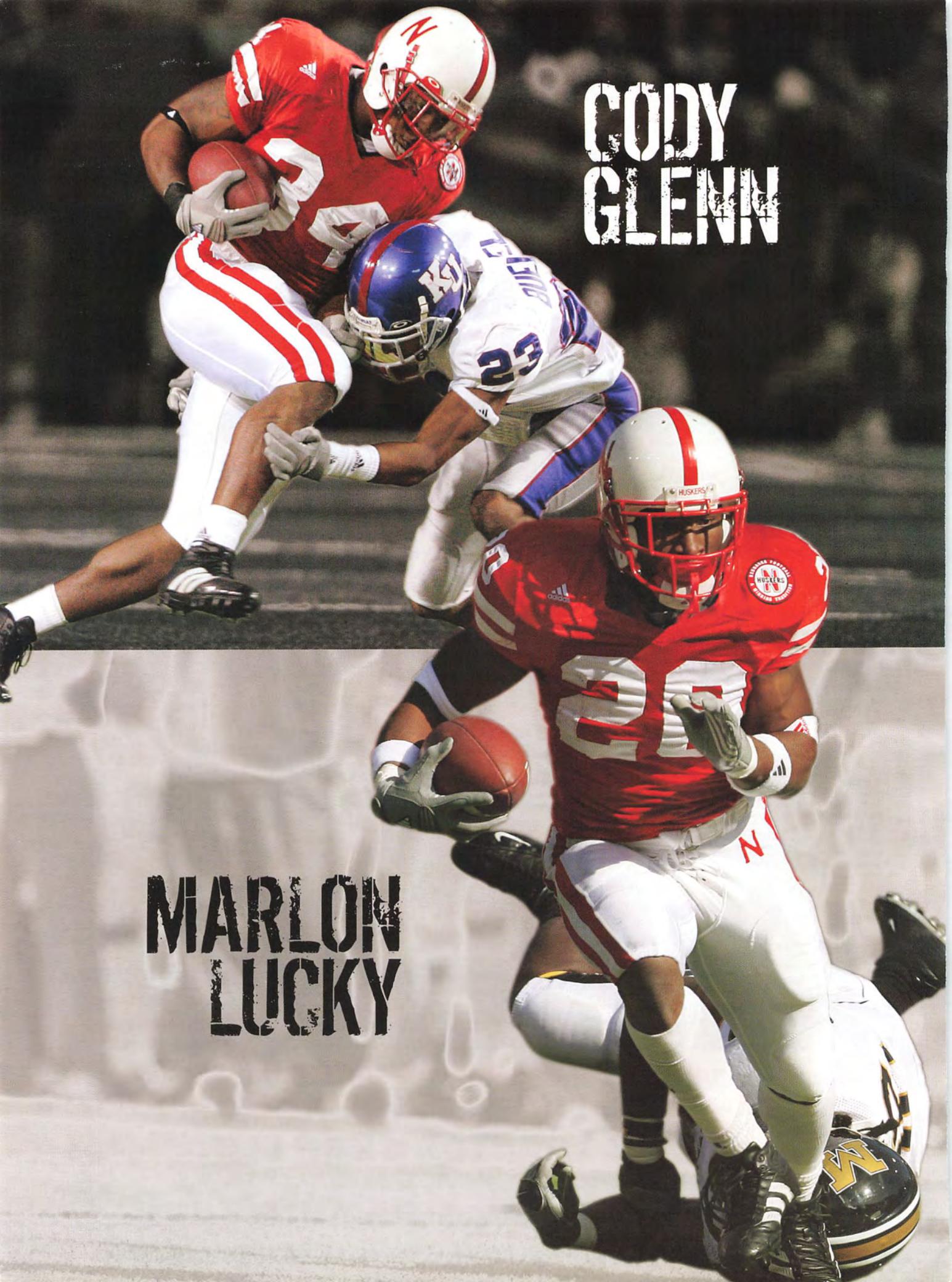
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CODY
GLENN

MARLON
LUCKY

FOOTBALL IS FUN AGAIN

Most college athletes, and those who travel a significant distance from home in particular, have to battle through tough times early on. And Cody Glenn was no different.

The junior from Rusk, Texas, was homesick and often discouraged as a freshman.

Off the field, he had to adjust to new surroundings as well as increased academic

demands, while on the field, he was constantly concerned about making mistakes during practice.

As a result, football wasn't as much fun as it always had been.

Two years later, it's fun again. "I'm not thinking, 'I hope I'm not messing up. I hope I'm not going to get in trouble for this or that,'" Glenn said. "With that behind me, it's a lot more fun now. But in the earlier days, it wasn't. It was more

AT A GLANCE

Returning I-Back

Marlon Lucky	6-0, 210	Jr.
Cody Glenn	6-0, 230	Jr.
Major Culbert	6-0, 210	So.
Kenny Wilson	6-0, 220	Sr.

Fullback

Matt Senske	6-3, 245	Sr.
Thomas Lawson	6-0, 240	Jr.
Justin Makovicka	6-1, 235	RFr.
Andy Sand	6-2, 230	Sr.
Aaron Gillaspie	6-2, 235	RFr.

Incoming

Marcus Mendoza	5-10, 185	Fr.
Quentin Castille	6-1, 235	Fr.
Roy Helu	6-0, 220	Fr.

Outlook

Bottom line: The more running backs to coach, the happier he is. "I'm a little bit greedy when it comes to running backs," Randy Jordan said early in spring practice, commenting on the move of Major Culbert from safety to running back. "I want to have all of them. Give me 20, I take 20."

Jordan won't have 20. He won't have half that many. Depending on whether Culbert remains at running back or returns to safety, he'll have five or six on scholarship. And only two of the five or six will be experienced: Marlon Lucky and Cody Glenn, who was less than 100 percent in the spring.

Kenny Wilson isn't expected to play because of injuries, leaving three freshmen in the mix, including Marcus Mendoza, who enrolled in January and participated in spring practice.

Even though Lucky and Glenn figure to carry the load, "you need everybody," said coach Bill Callahan. "Last year, I remember going down to the (Big 12) media day and telling the media that we were going to run all four. I got some chuckles from guys in the background.

"But we used all four and used them effectively."

Callahan was referring to an I-back "committee" consisting of Lucky, Glenn, Wilson and Brandon Jackson. Lucky began the season as the starter but gave way to Jackson, who would lead the team in rushing and earn first-team all-conference recognition from the Associated Press.

When bowl practice began, however, Lucky was the only

healthy member of the committee, and even he was bothered by back issues, underscoring Jordan's never-have-enough comments.

Plus, "you just never know who's going to emerge," Jordan said. "If you had said 'Brandon Jackson' when you looked at the depth chart last year, you would have been like, 'What?'"

Though all four on the committee were ostensibly equal, Jackson was the fourth listed going into training camp and remained fourth early on. But evaluation "takes place throughout the entire season," said Jordan. "I'm always looking to see, 'OK, who's working hard? Who's slacking off?'"

With Jackson skipping his senior season and leaving as a second-round draft pick of the Green Bay Packers, and Wilson sidelined, the freshmen — Mendoza, Quentin Castille and Roy Helu — will have an opportunity to contribute without redshirting. "The door's not closed," Jordan said.

"We don't have two store owners (Lucky and Glenn). I'm still the one that's holding the key."

The focus will be on Lucky and whether the five-star recruit from North Hollywood, Calif., can have a breakout season. He declined interviews in the spring, after dealing with personal matters, among them the departures of Jackson, his former roommate, and assistant coach John Blake, who recruited him, as well as an unspecified medical emergency that led to his hospitalization in February.

But he worked hard during the off-season, according to Callahan and Jordan, and in addition to being bigger and stronger, he was seeing the field better. He has "tremendous up-side not only as a ball carrier but as a receiver as well, maybe more up-side as a receiving-type back than any back here since I've been here, probably more than (Cory) Ross because he can get on the perimeter and get out there like a receiver," Callahan said. "We haven't had a guy do that since we've been here."

As for Culbert, the position at which he can best help the team has yet to be determined. "Major is one of those players that has a versatility to play both sides of the ball," said Callahan.

Nebraska ranked sixth in the conference and 23rd nationally in rushing, averaging 170.5 yards per game and 4.3 yards per carry. Overlooked in producing those numbers, perhaps, was the contribution of fullback Dane Todd, who completed his eligibility and must be replaced.

Matt Senske, a prime candidate, missed spring practice because of injury.

20 MARLON LUCKY

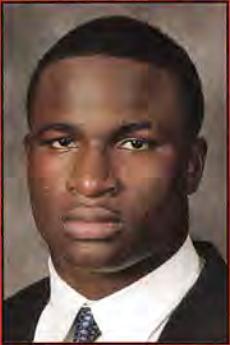
I-Back

6-0/210

Jr./Two Letters

North Hollywood, Calif.

Lucky made six starts as a sophomore, finishing with 728 yards rushing and six touchdowns. He caught 32 passes for 383 yards and averaged better than 11 yards on eight kickoff returns.



6 MAJOR CULBERT

I-Back/Defensive Back

6-0/210

So./One Letter

Harbor City, Calif.

Culbert practiced at I-back during bowl preparations and spent the spring on offense after injuries left NU thin. As a freshman, he played in 12 games on defense and special teams.



34 CODY GLENN

I-Back

6-0/230

Jr./Two Letters

Rusk, Texas

Glenn gained 370 yards and scored a team-high eight rushing touchdowns during his sophomore season, despite being slowed by injuries. He averaged 5.2 yards per carry.



27 KENNY WILSON

I-Back

6-0/220

Sr./One Letter

Liberal, Kan.

Wilson, who carried 75 times for 335 yards and four touchdowns in his first season in the program, will likely miss the 2007 season after breaking his leg during a freak accident in the spring.



like a business, just getting acclimated to stuff that was going on."

Some days "you just wanted to say, 'Forget it. I quit,'" he said.

Considering he was able to contribute as a true freshman, he had to endure more such days than one might have imagined. "I went through quite a few like that," he said.

He endured the difficult days for several reasons, including constant encouragement from former Cornhusker I-back Cory Ross, who's now playing in the NFL. Ross, a senior in 2005, regularly reminded him to stay with it, "just hang through it," said Glenn. "That helped a lot, a whole lot."

Glenn had to hang through a tough spring because of a foot injury suffered against Texas A&M last season. At first, he thought he had sprained an ankle and that he could shake it off.

He returned to the game, but only briefly, figuring with an off-week before the final regular-season game against Colorado, he would be good to go, if not against the Buffaloes, then after that. But when he attempted to practice on the Wednesday before the Colorado game, "it kind of gave out," he said. "I thought it would be a couple of more weeks and then it just led on to weeks and months."

He did participate in bowl practices. In retrospect, he regrets not taking off that time to allow the injury, which he describes as a "mid-foot sprain," to heal. "If I had played (in the bowl game), I wouldn't regret it," he said, laughing. "It kind of felt good some days and some days it didn't. But it kind of felt like I could play, and then I

wanted to play so bad (that) I kind of told myself it felt good."

Finally, however, he realized the extent of the injury and the need to rest it.

There was talk of his not practicing in the spring. He underwent a series of tests beforehand, including an MRI and x-rays, and the determination was the problem wouldn't worsen. So he practiced through constant pain, five months after the injury occurred.

He wore a steel plate and orthotic in his shoe as a precaution.

"He's excited to be out here. He's cutting real well," running backs coach Randy Jordan said early in the spring. "He's doing everything we ask him to do, so we're real excited about that."

"We pride ourselves in his being able to play through a little bit of pain. He's continued to work really hard, and so we've just got to keep grinding on him and take care of him through the spring."

Glenn might have been cutting well, but not without pain and not as sharply as he would have liked. He was forced to round off his runs. Straightaway he was OK, relatively pain free, until late in practice anyway. Then the foot hurt no matter what he did, running straight ahead or cutting.

By the end of practice it was "pretty painful," Glenn said.

He had a brief scare near the end of spring when 345-pound offensive tackle Carl Nicks stepped on his foot during a pass protection drill. "The first thing that hit my mind (was), 'Aw, I've got to start back over; it's back to the way it was,'" said Glenn. "But it really wasn't that

42 MATT SENSK

Fullback

6-3/245

Sr./No Letters

Bellevue, Neb.

Senske, a leading candidate to take over for the graduated Dane Todd at fullback, missed spring practice because of an injury. He caught two passes for 13 yards and a touchdown in 2006.



36 THOMAS LAWSON

Fullback

6-0/240

Jr./One Letter

Parker, Colo.

Lawson has added depth at both I-back and fullback. A walk-on who redshirted in his first season (2004), he had five carries for 19 yards and one reception for 17 yards in the Spring Game.



bad."

With the rest period following the Spring Game until summer conditioning was to begin in early June, he expected to be fine and if not quite by then, certainly by the start of preseason practice.

Glenn rushed for 370 yards and eight touchdowns, tying Brandon Jackson for the team lead, last season. This season, he expects to share the ball-carrying load with Marlon Lucky.

With Jackson gone and Kenny Wilson sidelined, he and Lucky are the only experienced I-backs. Even so, "I wouldn't say we feel any more pressure," said Glenn. "The only pressure we will feel is just helping the young guys out, trying to get them in the system, get them going.

"But as far as us two and production-wise, doing what we do, we don't feel any pressure here because we are experienced and know what to expect; we know how to do it."

There's comfort in that, which makes playing fun, though in a different way than when he was a youngster, playing for the sake of playing. "Now it's a little more serious," Glenn said. "I mean, when you're out at practice you've got to have fun, but you know it's for a bigger cause.

"If you're not having fun, you're probably not going to do as well as you want to anyway. So there's a serious side, too. But you've also got to try to have fun with it."

Ross helped Glenn learn that back when he was a freshman. ■

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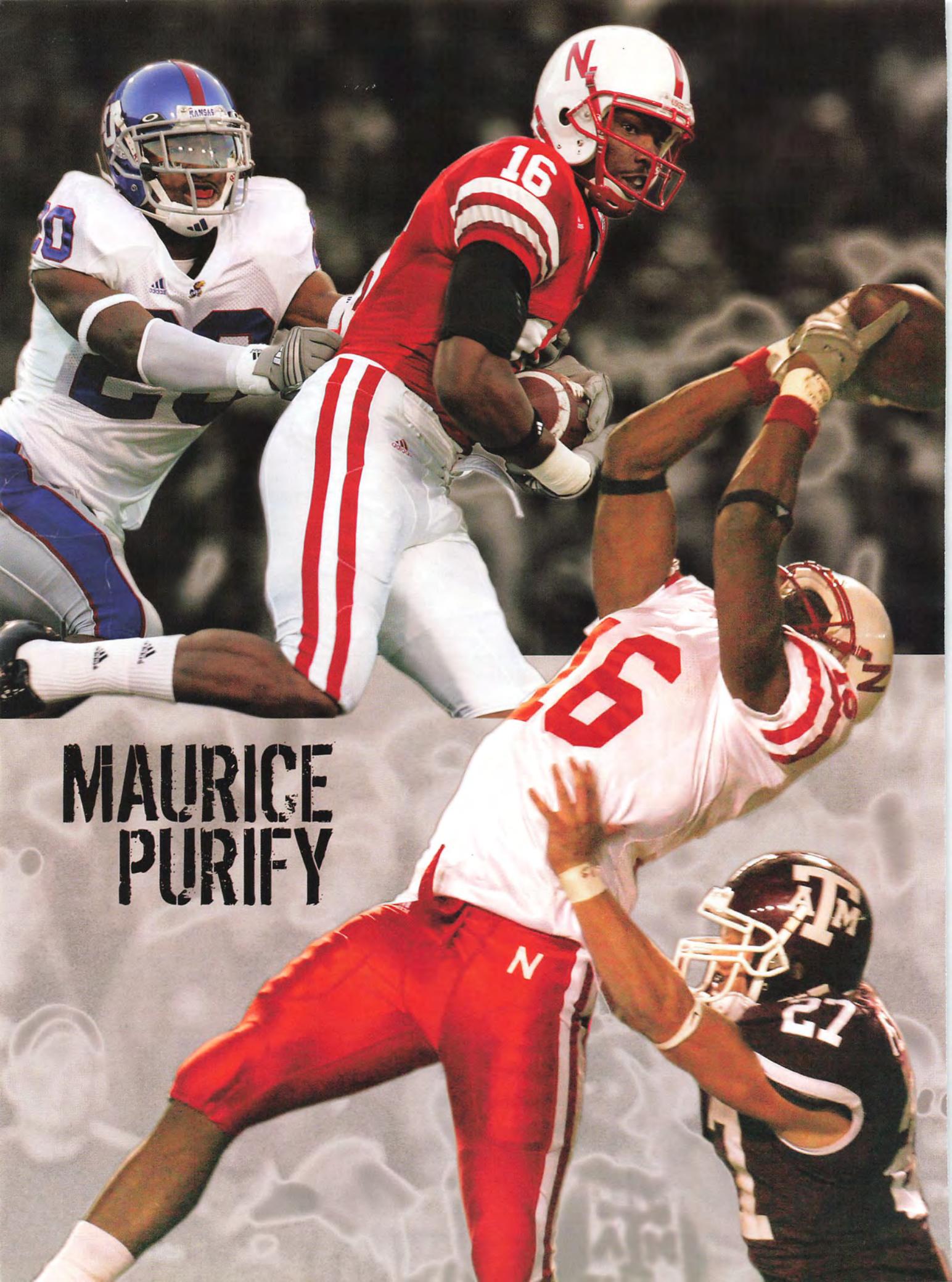
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MAURICE PURIFY

A LASTING IMPRESSION

Andre Jones knew immediately; the San Francisco City College receiver was special. "When I covered him the first time, it was like, 'I'm going to see this guy again,'" Jones said.

By "see" he meant hear about the big receiver, maybe watch him on television, catching passes for a prominent major college. Jones never imagined

he would find himself covering the guy in two more games, and he certainly never imagined he would someday be playing on the same team.

Based on their first couple of encounters, he didn't much like the guy. The truth is, "we hated each other in junior college," said Jones, who spent two seasons at Fresno City College.

AT A GLANCE

Returning Wide Receiver

Maurice Purify	6-4, 220	Sr.
Terrence Nunn	6-0, 190	Sr.
Frantz Hardy	6-1, 190	Sr.
Todd Peterson	6-4, 210	Jr.
Nate Swift	6-2, 200	Jr.
Menelik Holt	6-4, 215	So.
Will Henry	6-5, 210	RFr.
Chris Brooks	6-2, 210	So.
Wes Cammack	5-11, 185	So.
Dan Erickson	6-1, 195	Sr.
Xavier Rucker	5-6, 160	RFr.

Tight End/H-Back

J.B. Phillips	6-3, 245	Sr.
Josh Mueller	6-5, 265	Sr.
Hunter Teafatiller	6-3, 230	Jr.
Sean Hill	6-3, 250	Sr.
Mike McNeill	6-4, 225	RFr.
Dan Glassman	6-4, 245	RFr.
Ben Tasa	6-3, 230	RFr.
Drew Young	6-4, 220	RFr.

Incoming Wide Receiver

Niles Paul	6-1, 210	Fr.
Curenski Gilleylen	6-0, 210	Fr.

Tight End/H-Back

Ryan Hill	6-3, 230	Fr.
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Outlook

Wide receivers are to the offense what linebackers are to the defense with depth and experience. The position is a "real strength," coach Bill Callahan said. "They have size and speed and playmaking ability. We just have to find more creative ways of getting them all on the field at one time."

There was some re-arranging of players in the spring so that the bigger, taller guys were designated as X receivers, though such designations don't limit where a receiver lines up or how he is used.

In general, an X receiver or split end lines up on the ball while a Z receiver or flanker lines up off the ball and does "more motion stuff," said Todd Peterson, who moved from Z to X in the spring.

A flanker "will get motioned down into his route, but for a split end, most of the time you're static coming into your route," he said. As a result, the X receiver is likely to have to deal with "more press, man, one-on-one pressure. It's just

how you get into your routes. It's not a major thing."

Maurice Purify is the primary X receiver, Terrence Nunn the No. 1 Z receiver. They were the team's leading receivers last season with 76 catches between them for 1,227 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Wide receivers coach Ted Gilmore identified three areas in which his players needed to improve: coming out of cuts, "what we call burst turns," running man and zone routes "as far as our crossing routes" and yards after contact. "We need to learn how to run in the open field," he said.

Also, they needed to do a better job of holding onto the ball. Dropped passes were an unexpected concern during the spring. "You can't accept that," said Gilmore.

Purify and Nate Swift finished spring one-two at the X position.

Swift caught 22 passes for 374 yards and two touchdowns last season after leading the team with 45 catches for 641 yards and seven touchdowns as a redshirted freshman.

Peterson, who caught four passes for 105 yards in the Spring Game, Menelik Holt, Will Henry and Chris Brooks also played X receiver during the spring.

Frantz Hardy moved to Z receiver in the spring, joining Nunn as a big-play threat. Hardy's 78-yard touchdown reception against Kansas was the season's longest, with Nunn's 75-yard touchdown reception against the Jayhawks the second-longest. Dan Erickson also figures in at the Z position.

Erickson's "ball skills might not be as good as those guys (Nunn and Hardy), but you know what you're going to get. I'm going to get a full-speed effort every single time," Gilmore said.

Nebraska's "shift-motion game" is designed to keep the defense "as vanilla as possible," said Peterson, "play base coverages and not know what we're going to do."

And there should be enough receivers to accomplish that. Callahan's offense is "definitely set up great for receivers to make plays," Peterson said. "We spread the ball around a lot."

The tight ends figure in, too, as reflected by the fact that J.B. Phillips, Hunter Teafatiller and Josh Mueller combined for eight touchdowns among their 23 catches.

Teafatiller led the way with four of his five receptions producing scores.

Redshirted freshman Mike McNeill, who missed spring practice because of injury, will add to the position, which has its third coach, Joe Rudolph, in as many seasons.

The number of tight ends might seem high "but you have to realize that you're spreading that out to anywhere from three to four positions, depending on the formations," said Phillips.

16 MAURICE PURIFY

Wide Receiver

6-4/220

Sr./One Letter

Eureka, Calif.

Purify made a huge impact, posting team-leading totals of seven touchdowns and 630 receiving yards. Among his 34 receptions, 29 were good for first downs, and 14 were for 20 yards or more.



87 NATE SWIFT

Wide Receiver

6-2/200

Jr./Two Letters

Hutchinson, Minn.

Swift's 67 catches in his first two seasons leave him tied for ninth on NU's career receptions list. After catching seven touchdown passes as a freshman, he added two more in 2006.



83 TERRENCE NUNN

Wide Receiver

6-0/190

Sr./Three Letters

Houston, Texas

Nunn, who has played in 37 career games, finished 2006 with a team-high 42 receptions for 597 yards and three touchdowns. He has 101 career receptions, 42 behind NU record-holder Johnny Rodgers.



7 FRANTZ HARDY

Wide Receiver

6-1/190

Sr./Two Letters

Miami, Fla.

Hardy, a big-play threat, averaged 22.6 yards on his 14 catches and scored three touchdowns. Against Kansas, he had three catches for 159 yards, the fourth-highest total in school history.



17 TODD PETERSON

Wide Receiver

6-4/210

Jr./Two Letters

Grand Island, Neb.

Peterson averaged 16.2 yards on his 19 receptions and had touchdown catches against Kansas and Texas A&M. He had a career-high seven catches for 82 yards against the Aggies.



4 MENELIK HOLT

Wide Receiver

6-4/215

So./One Letter

San Diego, Calif.

Holt, one of the first commitments in the 2006 class, hopes to play a more prominent role after lettering as a true freshman. Holt was a high school teammate of former NU kicker Jordan Congdon.



The big receiver, of course, was Maurice Purify. His team played Jones' team three times in two seasons, with San Francisco City College winning all three by lopsided scores. So when the two met during a recruiting trip to Nebraska, "there wasn't much love there really," Jones said.

Editor's note: Because of an off-field incident in Lincoln after the spring semester, Maurice Purify could be subject to disciplinary action by coach Bill Callahan. No action had been announced when the yearbook went to press.

That quickly changed. In fact, after Jones made an oral commitment to Nebraska, he tried to persuade Purify to commit to the Cornhuskers, too. Purify wanted to wait, however, in hopes that Southern California would offer a scholarship — and if not the Trojans, then maybe California.

"I'm like, 'You'd better come on over here, stop trippin' man,'" said Jones.

Purify wanted to play for USC. His high school coaches in Eureka, Calif., even "talked to (USC coach) Pete Carroll a little bit," said Purify. "He said I needed to get my grades up."

His grades were an issue for most four-year colleges, which is why his choices were limited out of high school.

87 WILL HENRY

Wide Receiver

6-5/210

RFr./No Letters

El Paso, Texas

Henry, one of four wide receivers in the 2006 recruiting class, adds impressive size and speed to the wide receiver position. He added weight and hopes to earn playing time after a redshirt season.



1 CHRIS BROOKS

Wide Receiver

6-2/210

So./No Letters

St. Louis, Mo.

Brooks hopes to play a more prominent role after sitting out 2006 as a redshirt. He was hindered by injuries throughout his freshman season and appeared in four games in 2005.



26 DAN ERICKSON

Wide Receiver

6-1/195

Sr./Two Letters

Omaha, Neb.

Erickson returns as a physical perimeter blocking presence. He played in all 14 games and finished with four catches for 85 yards. He added 12 tackles while playing on special teams.



82 WES CAMMACK

Wide Receiver

5-11/185

So./One Letter

DeWitt, Neb.

Cammack, a walk-on, lettered in 2006 after a redshirt season. A Regent's scholar, he earned a perfect 4.0 GPA in mechanized systems management in his first two semesters.



Nate Swift led Nebraska wide receivers in the Cotton Bowl with three catches for 44 yards and one touchdown.

He could have gone to Sacramento State or Weber State. That was about it.

So he decided to enroll at San Francisco City College, on the advice of a cousin who had played basketball at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, Calif.

Actually, the advice was from his cousin's basketball coach.

Purify was more interested in basketball than football until his junior year in high school and he had spent time during the summer with his cousin at Diablo Valley, playing basketball.

But he had started lifting weights as a high school junior, getting bigger and stronger. And he saw more opportunity as a football player. There would be more demand for a 6-foot-4, 215-pound wide receiver than for a basketball player that size. That was his reasoning, anyway.

So when his cousin asked if he planned to focus on football or basketball, he said football. Then he should go to San Francisco City College, his cousin's basketball coach told him.

85 J.B. PHILLIPS

Tight End
6-3/245

Sr./Three Letters
Colleyville, Texas

Phillips has developed into a reliable target, finishing with 13 catches for 82 yards and two touchdowns last season. He has 23 career starts, including 12 during his junior season.



89 HUNTER TEAFATILLER

Tight End
6-3/230

Jr./Two Letters
Kingsburg, Calif.

Teafatiller became NU's big-play tight end, converting four of his five receptions into touchdowns. He played in all 14 games, with two starts when NU opened in a three-tight end formation.



81 JOSH MUELLER

Tight End
6-5/265

Sr./Three Letters
Columbus, Neb.

Mueller played in all 14 games, with two starts, and caught five passes for 26 yards and two touchdowns. He also served on the PAT and field goal units for the third straight season.



44 MIKE McNEILL

Tight End
6-4/225

RFr./No Letters
Kirkwood, Mo.

McNeill, a member of the 2006 recruiting class, is expected to contribute after sitting out as a redshirt. He missed spring practice recovering from shoulder surgery.



San Francisco City College is a perennial football power. Former Cornhusker offensive lineman Cornealius Fuamatu-Thomas played there, as did current quarterback Zac Lee.

Lee was a grayshirt Purify's sophomore season. "There were a lot of good guys on that team, a lot of very good players," said Lee. "Mo's doing the same thing out here as he was in junior college."

Purify caught 68 passes for 1,318 yards and 19 touchdowns for a 10-2 team that lost in the state's junior college championship game. He was chosen as the game's offensive MVP.

He also led the San Francisco City College basketball team to the state semifinals. But his focus was on football. He played basketball just for fun, he said. Even so, Villanova offered a scholarship.

His junior college experience was "like a stepping stone," said Purify. "You never know how much I would have progressed if I had jumped straight into college. Some people come straight to a (four-year) college and lose their confidence. They're not starting and they're getting a bad attitude."

So if he had it to do over, "I'd go back to junior college," he said.

"I went to junior college and made a name for myself." Cornhusker wide receivers coach Ted Gilmore eased

him into the system, not wanting him to be overwhelmed as Frantz Hardy was the previous season. Hardy, a transfer from Butler County (Kan.) Community College, started the first two games in 2005. He caught 11 passes for 181 yards and a touchdown in those games but was less productive as the season went on.

Purify saw limited action early in the season and didn't become a starter until the ninth game at Oklahoma State. He finished second on the team with 34 catches for 630 yards and seven touchdowns, both team highs. He gained 20 or more yards on 14 of those catches.

Despite the numbers, he wasn't satisfied with his consistency. He dropped too many passes. "I'm not the fastest guy; I'm not Frantz Hardy, where I'm going to catch the ball in the open all the time. I'm going to catch the ball with people around me," he said. "So I need to work on catching the ball."

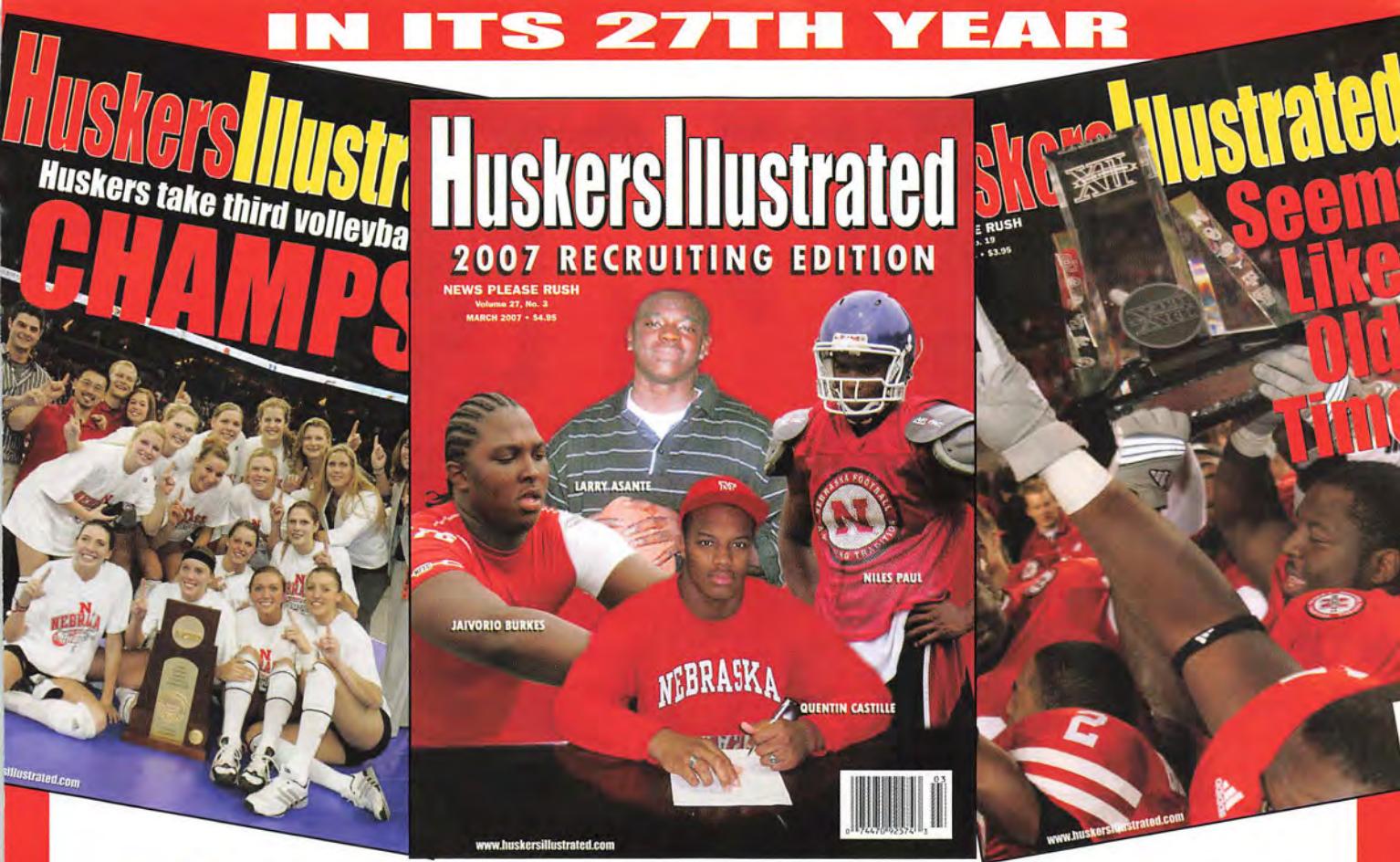
He worked on that during the spring and did well. "I have one guy who's been catching the ball consistently," Gilmore said. "The rest of them have not been consistent."

The one to whom Gilmore referred was Purify. That would come as no surprise to Jones. "I knew he'd be a good threat to our offense," said Jones. ■



Hunter Teafatiller is congratulated by assistant Shawn Watson after one of the tight end's four touchdown catches.

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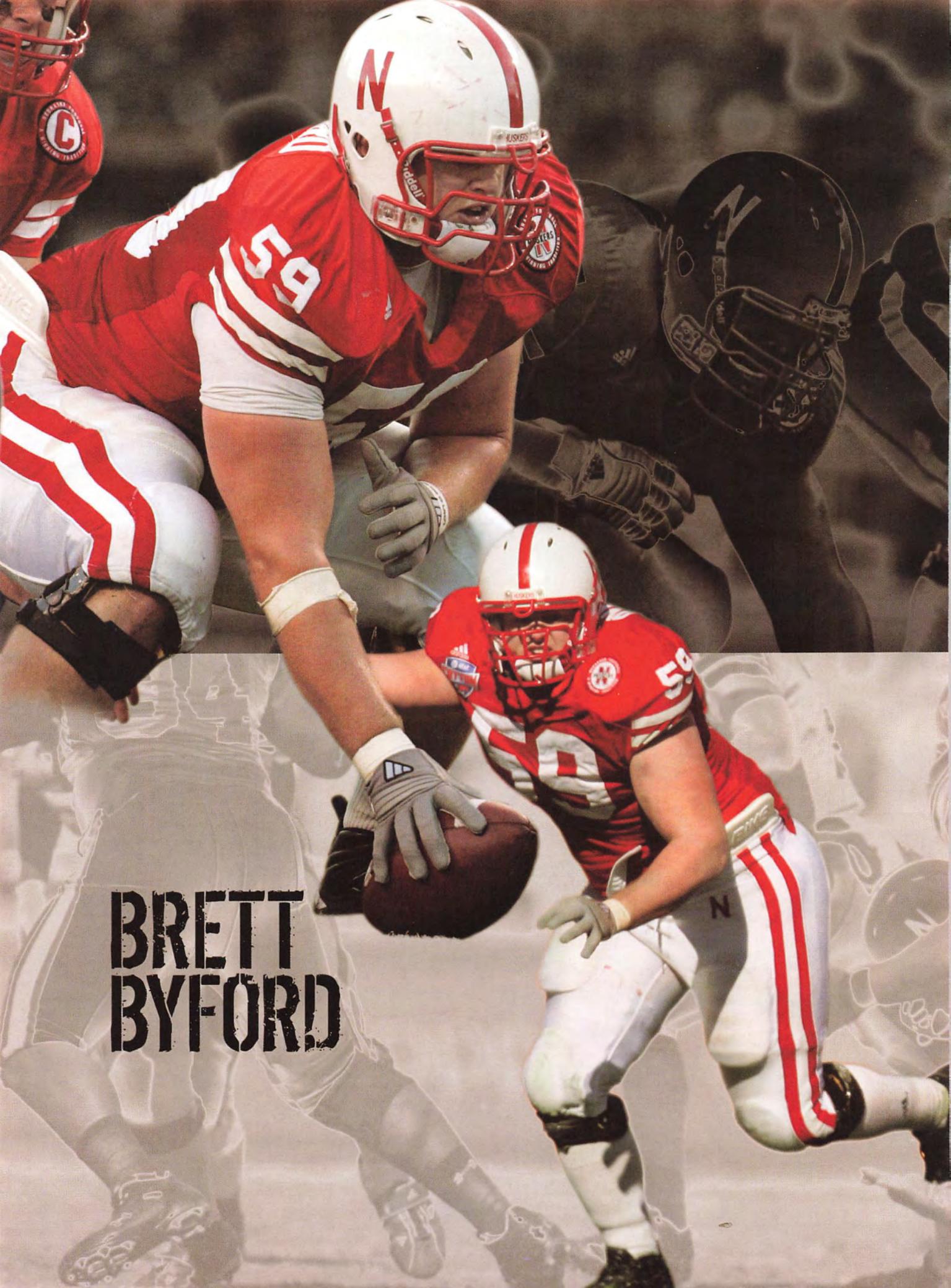
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**BRETT
BYFORD**

VIVID RECOLLECTIONS

His time at Nebraska has passed quickly. That's usually how it seems for seniors. And Brett Byford, "Bama" to his teammates, is no different.

Recollections of spring practice when he was a freshman, for instance, remain vivid.

Bill Callahan had replaced Frank Solich as coach and was installing a new and complicated offense. A new head coach, one who had coached in the Super Bowl no less, magnified everything, creating an even greater sense of urgency for young players uncertain of where they might fit in.

Byford, like others in his recruiting class, had a solid

resume. He was all-state, all-region and all-area as a high school senior in Hartselle, Ala., a thriving community with a population of nearly 14,000, located in the north central part of the state, not far from the Tennessee state line.

Byford, who also took recruiting trips to South Carolina, Georgia Tech and Clemson, was the Cornhuskers' first scholarship recruit from Alabama since Dwayne Harris in 1991.

In the spring of 2004, he was trying to establish himself on the depth chart after slipping into relative anonymity (as most offensive linemen do) practicing on the scout team his first season. He would be up late at night, working on the offensive line tests, determined, "trying to figure it all out,"

playing time. And compete they will, with only 10 spots for offensive linemen likely to be available on the travel roster. So "it's a great situation," said offensive line coach Dennis Wagner.

As in the past, flexibility is important. To illustrate, Slauson started 11 games at right tackle last season before being sidelined by a high-ankle sprain. He was replaced by Nicks for two starts, then Murtha, who had been alternating with Patrick on the left side, moved over for the Cotton Bowl.

Slauson, who earned second-team all-conference recognition from the coaches, moved to right guard during bowl practices and remained there in the spring, while Murtha settled in at right tackle and Nicks moved over to left tackle, the position for which he was recruited out of junior college.

Can you follow all of that? Oh yes, Hickman played guard last season.

Hickman started against Missouri, only the second true freshman to start a game in Nebraska's offensive line since 1972, when the NCAA restored freshman eligibility. Slauson, one of 13 true freshmen to play in 2005, was the first, starting three games at right tackle late in the season.

Hickman, who missed spring practice because of injury, was just the seventh true freshman offensive lineman to earn a letter, in fact. Williams might have been the eighth. At one point it appeared he might be pulled from a redshirt, spending time working with the first team in practice.

The young linemen are "amazing, powerful guys," said Slauson. "They're huge . . . and they're all some of the strongest guys when they work together. I'm really excited to see them play."

Size is a significant element of Callahan's profile for offensive linemen. "They're huge, geez, they're huge," junior quarterback Joe Ganz said. "My freshman year, they weren't that big. I mean, I thought they were big because I was coming out of high school. But now that I look at how big these guys are . . . we had Seppo (Evvaraye), who was really big, but other than that, nobody (else)."

"Now we've got Slauson and those guys blocking out the sun. I mean, it's going to take a couple of days to run around those guys. I can sit back in the pocket and just kind of relax a little bit."

Only two starters are gone, tackle Chris Patrick and guard Greg Austin, and Austin started only half the season. With Austin ailing, Andy Christensen started six of the final eight games at left guard. So even though the line is young (Brett Byford and Carl Nicks are the only projected senior starters), it is experienced, and should be a strength of the team, according to coach Bill Callahan.

"I like our offensive line, the size, stature, profile of the players," he said following the Spring Game. "We're still not where we want to be, but we've made tremendous strides and improvements."

It will look something like this going into preseason practice: Byford at center, Christensen at left guard, Matt Slauson at right guard, Nicks at left tackle and Lydon Murtha at right tackle, with Mike Huff (who started 13 games at right guard in 2006) as the swing guard and Jacob Hickman as the swing tackle.

In addition, redshirted freshmen Keith Williams, D.J. Jones, Mike Smith and Cruz Barrett will be competing for

AT A GLANCE

Returning

Brett Byford	6-3, 300	Sr.
Andy Christensen	6-3, 300	Jr.
Jacob Hickman	6-4, 285	So.
Mike Huff	6-4, 300	Jr.
Lydon Murtha	6-7, 305	Jr.
Carl Nicks	6-5, 330	Sr.
Matt Slauson	6-5, 335	Jr.
Victory Haines	6-7, 290	Sr.
Keith Williams	6-5, 310	RFr.
D.J. Jones	6-5, 310	RFr.
Cruz Barrett	6-4, 325	RFr.
Jordan Picou	6-2, 305	Sr.
Mike Smith	6-6, 285	RFr.
Dennis Bergland	6-1, 290	RFr.

Incoming

Jaivorio Burkes	6-5, 315	Fr.
Marcel Jones	6-7, 300	Fr.

Outlook

59 BRETT BYFORD

Center

6-3/300

Sr./One Letter

Hartselle, Ala.

Byford had played in just one game entering last season but was thrust into action when starter Kurt Mann was sidelined because of illness. Byford went on to start the final 13 games.



62 ANDY CHRISTENSEN

Offensive Guard

6-3/300

Jr./One Letter

Bennington, Neb.

Christensen was Nebraska's top reserve at both guard positions in 2006 before moving into the starting lineup at midseason. He started six of the final eight games at left guard.



67 JACOB HICKMAN

Offensive Tackle

6-4/285

So./One Letter

Bakersfield, Calif.

Hickman became just the second true freshman offensive lineman to start a game (vs. Missouri) for NU since 1972. He missed spring practice because of a knee injury during bowl preparations.



61 MIKE HUFF

Offensive Guard

6-4/300

Jr./Two Letters

Ralston, Neb.

Huff had a breakthrough season, starting at right guard for 13 games as a sophomore. He suffered an Achilles injury during winter conditioning and missed spring practice.



76 LYDON MURTHA

Offensive Tackle

6-7/305

Jr./Two Letters

Hutchinson, Minn.

Murtha, a junior veteran, will look to become a full-time starter after making three starts at left tackle in each of his first two seasons. He settled in at right tackle in the spring.



77 CARL NICKS

Offensive Tackle

6-5/330

Sr./One Letter

Salinas, Calif.

Nicks, who made two starts late last season, is a front-runner for the starting spot at left tackle. He appeared in 11 games during his first season, backing up starting right tackle Matt Slauson.



70 MATT SLAUSON

Offensive Guard

6-5/335

Jr./Two Letters

Colorado Springs, Colo.

Slauson started the first 11 games last season at right tackle before suffering an ankle injury. He moved to right guard during bowl practices and remained there in the spring.



75 VICTORY HAINES

Center

6-7/290

Sr./No Letters

Logan, Utah

Haines, who came to Nebraska as a transfer from Snow College in 2006, spent time at offensive tackle before moving to center in the spring, where he backed up Brett Byford.



68 KEITH WILLIAMS

Offensive Guard

6-5/310

RFr./No Letters

Florissant, Mo.

Williams, one of a talented group of redshirted freshmen offensive linemen, was nearly pulled from a redshirt season and spent time working with the first team in practice because of injuries.



73 D.J. JONES

Offensive Tackle

6-5/310

RFr./No Letters

Omaha, Neb.

Jones stepped in with the top unit when Lydon Murtha suffered a sprained ankle in the Spring Game. He was the Huskers' first commitment for the 2006 class as the top prospect in Nebraska.



he said.

"We were speaking up stuff in our sleep. It was tough."

He remembers, in particular, studying alignments and plays with redshirted freshmen Newt Lingenfelter and Cory Timm. There were others whose names he has forgotten. "None of them are here anymore," he said. "Man, I'm the only one from that group. We put in some time."

Byford was among four offensive linemen in the 2003 recruiting class. The others were Greg Austin, Ryan Schuler and Darren DeLone, a junior college transfer. Austin and DeLone played right away, while Schuler was hampered by a blood clot problem and eventually transferred.

In any case, the beginning of Byford's Cornhusker career was fairly typical for an offensive lineman: redshirt and then compete for playing time as a back-up in the second season.

Byford seemed to be on pace, playing briefly in the 2004 opener against Western Illinois. But he wouldn't play again until last season, and then only because Kurt Mann was sidelined.

Nebraska fans know the story of Byford's surprise rise from obscurity to become the starter and earn all-conference honorable mention from both the coaches and the Associated Press.

Now he is on the watch list for the 2007 Rimington Award, presented to the nation's top collegiate center. And he has NFL Draft potential, according to his position coach, Dennis Wagner.

To put that in perspective, only five Cornhusker offensive linemen have been selected in the NFL Draft since 2000, and that list includes Richie Incognito (whom Callahan dismissed in 2004). Next April, Byford and Carl Nicks, expected to be the starting left tackle, both could be drafted.

That Byford persisted and prepared for the unexpected opportunity presented by Mann's being sidelined by illness early last season is a tribute primarily to his religious faith.

"I'd be honest; I don't think there was anything natural about that," said Byford. "It was a matter of faith and knowing that God brought me here for a reason. I wouldn't even give myself credit for that because that was my

66 CRUZ BARRETT

Offensive Tackle

6-4/325

RFr./No Letters

Daytona Beach, Fla.

Barrett was one of two recruits from Florida and one of four offensive linemen in the 2006 class. After working on the scout team during his redshirt season, he will push for playing time in 2007.



drive for the whole three years, however long it was.

"God really did bring me here for that purpose. I'll be honest. Had it not been for that reality, for faith in that, there's no way I would have kept working. I don't naturally have enough competitive drive to do it on my own. You get the 'What's the point?' mentality. It was a temptation for me."

Because of his faith, however, "I didn't entertain it too much," he said. "My biggest thing when I wasn't playing was just to put myself in position to where, if I did get the chance, I wouldn't mess it up. That's basically what I did. So it's pretty cool the way it all worked out."

Though his purpose includes more than football — he ministers at the state penitentiary — his immediate focus is anchoring the line for what can be a "really awesome" offense.

At first exposure, learning the intricacies and terminology of Callahan's offense can be like learning a foreign language. "You kind of have to be bilingual to speak it," said Byford. "Right now it's not too bad. Early on, it could be frustrating a little bit. But once you get it, it's good."

It seems as if he and Lingenfelter and Timm were up late at night, trying to make sense of the system, not all that long ago. But three years have passed.

"I'd say it's definitely gone by fast," Byford said. "It's been a ride." ■

DRAFTED LINEMEN

SINCE 2000

2001

Dominic Raiola (2nd)
Russ Hochstein (5th)

2002

Toniu Fonoti (2nd)

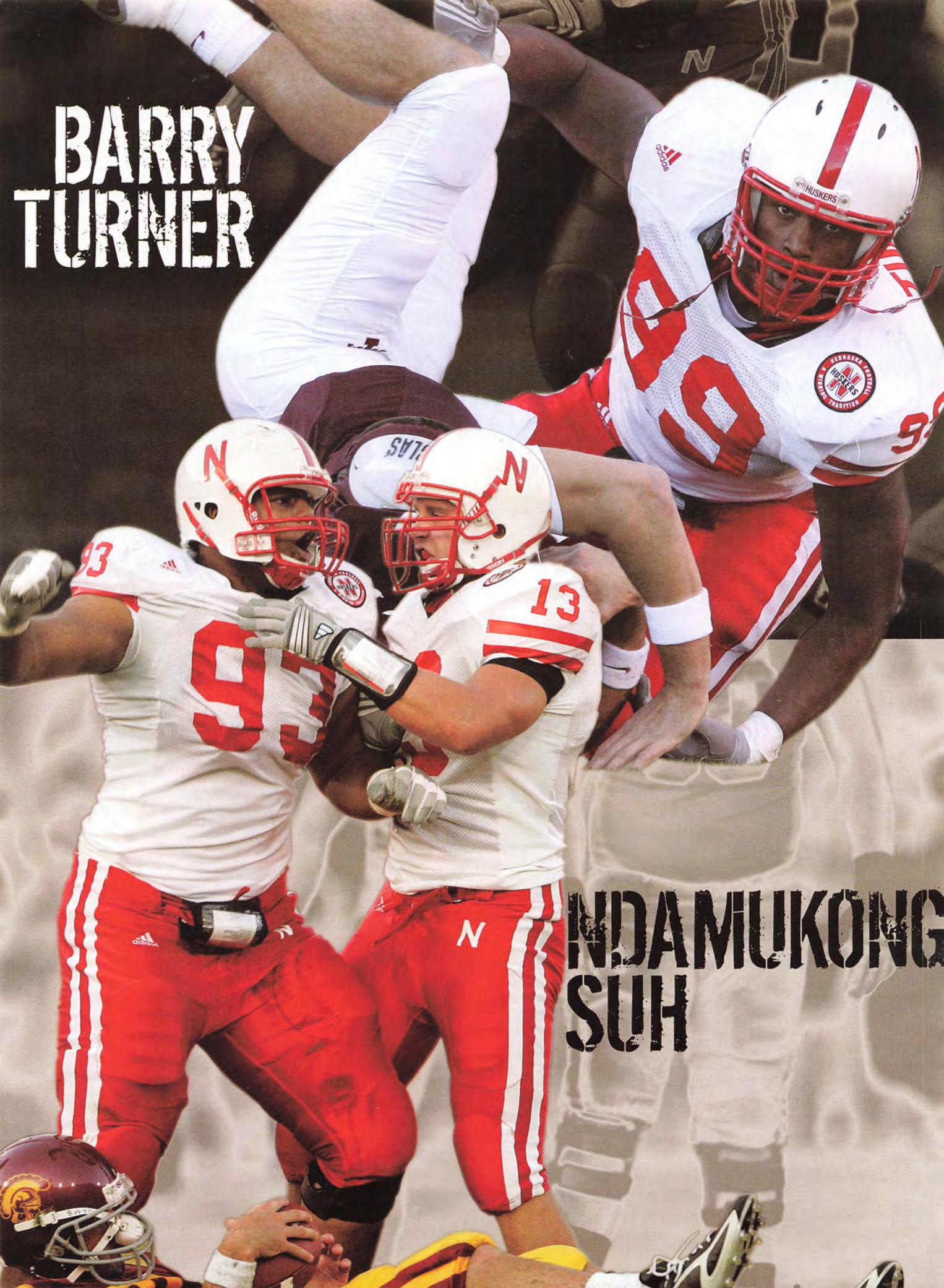
2004

Josh Sewell (6th)

2005

Richie Incognito (3rd)

BARRY TURNER



NDAMUKONG SUH

CONSISTENCY THE KEY

Among the negatives of spring football practice is having to line up against teammates every day. For sophomore nose tackle Ndamukong Suh, at least, it can be a negative.

Last spring, for example, center Brett Byford poked him in the eye, and "I had to brush it off. I was mad at him at first. It hurt. But I know he didn't do it intentionally," said Suh.

Plus, Byford apologized, something a player on another

team wouldn't do. "So that helped," Suh said. "It's a Catch 22. You want to get mad but you don't because he's your teammate."

On balance, however, going against Byford, a senior and returning starter at center, and guards Matt Slauson and Keith Williams every practice last spring was a positive, according to Suh.

Slauson, in particular, posed a challenge, not only because of his experience but also because of his size. The

AT A GLANCE

Returning Ends

Barry Turner	6-3, 250	Jr.
Zach Potter	6-7, 280	Jr.
Clayton Sievers	6-4, 245	Jr.
Andy Poulosky	6-2, 255	Sr.
Tony Sullivan	6-3, 240	Sr.
Thomas Rice	6-1, 240	Sr.
Pierre Allen	6-5, 235	RFr.
David Harvey	6-4, 255	So.

Tackles

Ndamukong Suh	6-4, 305	So.
Ty Steinkuhler	6-3, 285	Jr.
Seth Jensen	6-3, 295	RFr.
Brandon Johnson	6-3, 315	Sr.
Kevin Luhrs	6-1, 270	Sr.
Ben Martin	6-4, 270	RFr.
Craig Roark	6-2, 305	So.
Tyrone Fahie	6-3, 260	RFr.
Zach Jepson	6-2, 235	RFr.

Incoming Ends

Jared Crick	6-6, 260	Fr.
William Yancy	6-4, 230	Fr.

Tackles

Shukree Barfield	6-4, 310	Jr.
Kevin Dixon	6-3, 295	Jr.
Joseph Townsend	6-3, 285	Jr.
Demetrious Davis	6-2, 285	Fr.
Terrence Moore	6-3, 275	Fr.

Outlook

With all four starters gone, there's ample opportunity under new coach Buddy Wyatt, who replaced John Blake for the Cotton Bowl. "I like to play as many guys as are ready to play," said Wyatt.

"I tell our guys I just want to keep coming at them, keep pouring it on, try to suffocate them. The more people we can play and the fresher we are in the fourth quarter, the better we'll be."

The question is: How many linemen will be ready to play?

Suh, Ty Steinkuhler and Barry Turner, who missed spring practice while a shoulder injury healed, are the most experienced. Zach Potter has the difficult task of replacing Adam Carriker at base end, with Clayton Sievers moving from linebacker to compete with Turner at open-side end.

In addition to Brandon Johnson, junior college transfers Shukree Barfield, who went through spring practice, Kevin Dixon and Joseph Townsend could figure into the mix inside.

"We have to get the best people on the field," defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove said. "If we feel comfortable, we'll be able to 'roll' guys, which I always like to do."

However, "a guy might have to play two positions and 'roll' that way."

Both Suh and Steinkuhler are versatile enough to play more than one position up front. In addition to nose tackle, his primary position, Suh lined up at tackle (the "three" technique) and even base end during the spring, while Steinkuhler played both the three technique and base end.

Steinkuhler, who wasn't as heavy as he is now, began his Cornhusker career as a defensive end, in fact. "There's a lot of carryover with both positions; there really is," said Cosgrove.

"I love the position flexibility."

Turner has to show he can be an every-down player after being used primarily as a pass rusher his first two seasons. He earned freshman All-America recognition in 2005, with six sacks for 46 yards in losses among his 14 tackles. Last season, however, his sack total dropped to 1.5.

Suh and Steinkuhler played well in the spring, according to middle linebacker Corey McKeon, who was in a good position to evaluate them. "They're really good," he said.

That stands to reason. They rotated with Ola Dagunduro and Barry Cryer last season.

Potter, whose experience has come primarily on special teams, has been in Carriker's considerable shadow the past two seasons, while Turner has played behind Jay Moore.

Evaluation will continue in training camp, and Wyatt has his work cut out.

"It would have made my job a little easier if I had Jay and Adam and those guys," he said with a smile early in spring practice. "But I'm happy with the guys I have. It's a good group, a fun group. They work extremely hard. So I'm excited about what the future holds at that position."

99 BARRY TURNER

Defensive End

6-3/250

Jr./Two Letters

Antioch, Tenn.

Turner, the top candidate to take over the open end position, missed spring practice after shoulder surgery. He played in all 14 games, finishing with 18 tackles, including 1.5 sacks.



88 CLAYTON SIEVERS

Defensive End

6-4/245

Jr./Two Letters

Elkhorn, Neb.

Sievers, a versatile performer, was a key contributor at tight end in 2005, then served as a reserve linebacker in '06. He also spent time at defensive end and was part of the goal-line defense.



98 ZACH POTTER

Defensive End

6-7/280

Jr./Two Letters

Omaha, Neb.

Potter has the size to step into the base end position, a spot that has been held down by Adam Carriger the past three seasons. He played in 13 games last season, finishing with three tackles.



95 PIERRE ALLEN

Defensive End

6-5/265

RFr./No Letters

Denver, Colo.

Allen continues to show his progress during spring practice and has added more than 40 pounds since his arrival on campus as part of the 2006 recruiting class at about 220 pounds.



junior from Colorado Springs, Colo., is listed at 6-foot-5 and 335 pounds.

One day, after a pass rush drill, Suh told defensive line coach Buddy Wyatt that he was having problems getting around Slauson "because he's so wide. I mean, it's hard. I was trying to beat him on the edge . . . but he's just so wide I couldn't keep going because he'd widen me out," said Suh. "So I had to go underneath. With a guy that big, with that size, you have to use that speed rush."

Suh has the speed to do that, even though he's not exactly small himself at 6-4 and 305 pounds, some 25 lighter than he weighed at the beginning of spring practice a year ago.

He was about 330 pounds and hated being so heavy. So he and James Harris, the football team's nutritionist, discussed how he could make sure he didn't gain weight during this off-season.

The reason? "I feel that when I'm at a lighter weight, in the lower 300's, I'm faster," Suh said. "I feel I'm a lot quicker. My first step is there, and I'm not hampering myself."

Truth be told, he would like to weigh what he did at Grant High in Portland, Ore., where he earned Parade All-America recognition playing both offensive and defensive line.

He weighed 290 and "was so much faster than I am now," he said. "But then again, I had baby fat. I lost some of my baby fat. I'm gaining muscle in the weight room."

In other words, he's not just heavier, he's leaner and stronger.

86 ANDY POULOSKY

Defensive End

6-2/255

Sr./One Letter

Ponca, Neb.

Poulosky, a walk-on who redshirted in 2003 and saw action in one game in 2004, earned a letter as a backup defensive end during his junior season and hopes to push for more playing time.



Also, he obviously didn't face the challenge in high school that he does now. His combination of size and athleticism were enough for him to succeed, sometimes without full focus.

"I didn't always have to play hard," he said. "When we were playing against a team we knew we were going to beat, I didn't always have that killer instinct. Here you don't have a choice. You either have that killer instinct or you're going to be put on your butt. That's the way it goes."

"It's a matter of training yourself and playing like you're mad, like somebody just put you on your butt and you're going back after them. That's how you need to learn how to play."

Consistency is the key for Suh, who played in every

77 NDAMUKONG SUH

Nose Tackle

6-4/305

So./One Letter

Portland, Ore.

Suh, a top backup at nose tackle, ranked among the team leaders in both tackles for loss and sacks. He finished with 19 total tackles, including 3.5 sacks and had an interception at Kansas State.



96 BRANDON JOHNSON

Nose Tackle

6-3/315

Sr./One Letter

Chicago, Ill.

Johnson played in six games and earned a letter in his first season after transferring from Compton (Calif.) Community College, the same school as former NU defensive tackle Ola Dagunduro.



43 TY STEINKUHLER

Defensive Tackle

6-3/285

Jr./Two Letters

Lincoln, Neb.

Steinkuhler, who started his career as an end, was part of NU's inside rotation, playing in all 14 games and finishing with 22 tackles, including 15 solo stops. He is expected to be a starter in 2007.



56 SHUKREE BARFIELD

Defensive Tackle

6-4/310

Jr./No Letters

Camden, N.J.

Barfield, an athletic defensive lineman from Garden City (Kan.) Community College, joined the program for spring football and is expected to push for playing time in the interior.



game last season as Ola Dagunduro's back-up, following a medical redshirt. He figured in the defensive plans for 2005 and was among 13 true freshmen to see action, playing in two games before suffering a season-ending knee injury.



Buddy Wyatt took over as defensive line coach in December.

Despite his youth, he emerged as a leader in the defensive line during the spring. He "has a lot of talent. He's a very smart kid. He works extremely hard," said Wyatt.

He's also something of a perfectionist, by his own admission.

"He hates to make a mistake," Wyatt said. "He wants to be good. It's important to him. And he does things right. That's going to make him a really good football player."

If he does make a mistake, he's trying to set it aside.

89 KEVIN LUHRS

Defensive Tackle

6-1/270

Sr./One Letter

Omaha, Neb.

Luhrs played in four games and earned a letter as a backup defensive end in 2005 before moving inside to provide depth at tackle. A walk-on, he redshirted in 2003, his first season at NU.

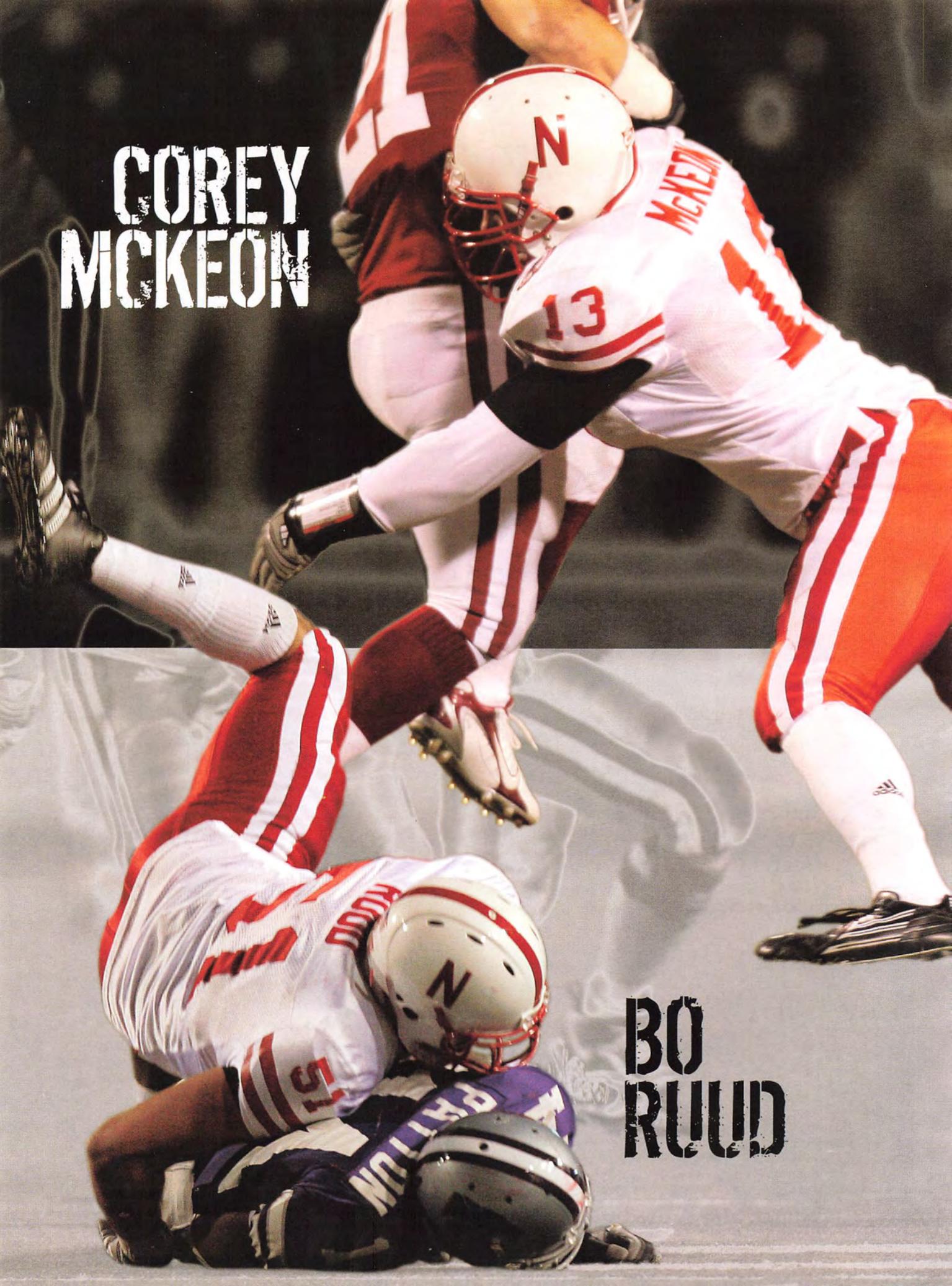


"I don't like to mess up. I like to be perfect. It's just been my personality; I want to be errorless," said Suh. "If things happen to go wrong, I tend to get a little frustrated. And you can see it."

"Coach Wyatt has told me if you end up making a mistake, brush it off and keep going, learn from your mistakes. It's hard to let go, but I'm learning to let it go and move on."

During the spring, he learned a lot about dealing with big, experienced players such as Slauson, "one of the biggest offensive linemen I'm going to go against. So if I'm doing everything right against him, I feel that I can go out and play against anyone else in the Big 12," Suh said.

And if one of them happens to poke him in the eye, he'll get mad, and stay mad. ■



COREY
MCKEON

BO
RUUD

POSITION NOT IMPORTANT

When former Cornhusker defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Bo Pelini looked at Corey McKeon, he saw a weakside linebacker. When current defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Kevin Cosgrove first looked at McKeon, he saw a middle linebacker, size notwithstanding.

When McKeon looked at himself in a mirror, he saw whatever would get him on the field. So when Cosgrove told him he'd be playing middle linebacker, he didn't question the move.

"It didn't matter to me," said McKeon. "I said, 'If you want me to play MIKE, I'll play MIKE.' I came out and

showed the way I play, and that's, I guess, what the defense needed."

Well, yes, you'd figure any defense would need a middle linebacker who played the way McKeon did following a redshirted freshman season spent in near anonymity — "near" because he did intercept a pass in his first game at Nebraska, coach Bill Callahan's opener against Western Illinois.

He never played another down in 2004, however, once joking that his job was to look good on the sideline. A season later, he looked good on the field, in the middle of the defense. He led the team with 98 tackles, including 22 for losses and seven sacks, and intercepted three passes in 2005.

AT A GLANCE

Returning

Corey McKeon	6-1, 225	Sr.
Bo Ruud	6-3, 235	Sr.
Steve Octavien	6-0, 240	Sr.
Lance Brandenburgh	6-1, 230	Sr.
Phillip Dillard	6-1, 250	So.
Nick Covey	6-2, 240	So.
Kyle Moore	6-2, 225	RFr.
Tyler Wortman	6-3, 230	Jr.
Colton Koehler	6-1, 230	So.
Andy McNeil	6-1, 245	RFr.

Incoming

Blake Lawrence	6-2, 200	Fr.
Austin Stafford	6-2, 205	Fr.

Outlook

Defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Kevin Cosgrove was discussing the defensive line on the Thursday before the Spring Game when a reporter who was late joining the interview asked a question Cosgrove had already addressed regarding defensive tackle Ty Steinkuhler.

Had Steinkuhler played base end? Yes, Cosgrove replied, "he's played a little base. He's played a little 'three technique' (tackle). And we moved him to free safety a couple of times."

Even if Cosgrove hadn't laughed, it would have been apparent he was joking about free safety. The 6-foot-3, 285-pound Steinkuhler is quick for his size, but not quick enough for safety. Still, practices were closed to reporters in the spring so who knows what changes were being made?

Were the Cornhuskers going to a 3-4 base alignment, for example? That speculation was commonplace among reporters with little else to do while waiting for practices to finish. After all, a strength of the defense is its four senior linebackers, all of whom have starting experience. Idle 3-4 talk aside, this much is clear. The plan is to utilize those linebackers in various ways.

Among the changes in the spring was moving Bo Ruud from the weakside, where he started for two seasons, to

strongside, replacing Stewart Bradley, the team's leading tackler in 2006.

Ruud, who earned first-team All-Big 12 recognition from the conference coaches, was tied for fourth on the team with 65 tackles, including seven for losses and two sacks.

He also intercepted two passes, forced three fumbles and recovered two.

Bradley was like an additional lineman at times because of his size. Ruud won't play such a role, though "we're going to be doing multiple things with him," said Cosgrove. "He's going to be doing a lot of the same things he did last year, but he'll be on the outside a little bit more."

"Bo's a guy that's got tremendous range and really good length. And as an outside linebacker, you like to have good length, long arms to keep tight ends away from your body."

The position switch also allows Cosgrove to have Ruud and Steve Octavien, the weakside linebacker, on the field at the same time. Octavien has been hampered by injuries throughout his Cornhusker career, playing in nine games last season after missing all but one quarter of his first season.

He drew attention for his pass rushing coming off the edge during the spring as the "joker" in what was essentially a 3-4 alignment, according to open-side end Clayton Sievers.

"He'll move around. He'll go into coverage. He'll blitz. He'll do a lot of different stuff," Sievers said. "They (coaches) want Octavien to, obviously, rush the quarterback."

Octavien's "burst is amazing," nose tackle Ndamukong Suh said following the Spring Game. "He's lost a couple of pounds and has gotten a lot quicker."

Lance Brandenburgh can play all three linebacker positions and is like a returning starter, according to Cosgrove, while Phillip Dillard, who started once as a true freshman, would have been in the regular rotation last season if he hadn't suffered a knee injury in the opener against Louisiana Tech.

Kyle Moore and Nick Covey, who has been sidelined by injuries throughout his career (and wasn't 100-percent healthy during the spring), are the top candidates to back up Ruud.

51 Bo Ruud

Strongside Linebacker

6-3/235

Sr./Three Letters

Lincoln, Neb.

Ruud moves to the strongside after starting 13 games and earning All-Big 12 honors at WILL. He had 65 tackles, including seven for loss, and added two interceptions and two fumble recoveries.



45 Nick Covey

Strongside Linebacker

6-2/240

So./No Letters

Glendale, Ariz.

Covey has battled injuries since arriving with the 2005 recruiting class. He redshirted his first season, then had shoulder surgery in the offseason. He had five tackles in the 2007 Spring Game.



13 Corey McKeon

Middle Linebacker

6-1/225

Sr./Two Letters

Naperville, Ill.

McKeon had a breakout season in 2005 leading the team with 98 tackles. He also led NU with 22 tackles for loss and three interceptions, and his seven sacks ranked second.



38 Phillip Dillard

Middle Linebacker

6-1/250

So./One Letter

Tulsa, Okla.

Dillard returns after a knee injury in the 2006 opener cost him the rest of the season. One of 13 true freshmen to see action in 2005, he played in 11 games and finished with 11 tackles.



And though his 2006 numbers were down by comparison, it wasn't for lack of effort. "He was banged up a lot," Cosgrove said. "He wasn't healthy, so it took a little bit away from his game."

Injuries might have taken away from his statistics, but they didn't take him away from the game. He started all but the Kansas State game, in which he didn't play because of an ankle injury.

And he would have played in that game, too, had the coaches allowed it.

The 6-foot-2 McKeon is a little light for a middle linebacker at the major college level. He weighed about 225 pounds in the spring and expects to be 230, give or take, in the fall.

He was listed at 215 as a freshman and weighed maybe 220 when Cosgrove told him he would be moving to the middle. He's been neither lighter than that nor heavier than 240 since.

"My fat ass went up to about 238 for the KU game last year," he said. "I couldn't breathe. I was about 232 at USC, and that was like my ideal playing weight throughout the season."

"I try to tone down the fat and stay skinny during the spring."

The reason? "Beach season," he said. "I'll be 230, 235 in the fall, for sure."

McKeon would be small for a middle linebacker in the Big Ten or even the Pac-10. But he considers his weight to be about right for the Big 12, with its wide-open, spread-the-field offenses.

The Big Ten is "downhill football," he said. The mid-

dle linebacker needs to stand in against the run, against offenses with two-back sets. In 14 games last season, Nebraska's opponents lined up in two-back sets only 64 times, according to Cosgrove. "Is that something?" he said.

"Now that's give or take a few, but it was about 64."

And one of those opponents, Nicholls State, threw only three passes.

Otherwise, "we're playing spread offenses every week," Cosgrove said.

To deal with such offenses "you want guys with speed," said McKeon. "You don't need to crush guys. That's the (defensive) linemen's job. It's (speed) very well needed."

"I'm playing at a lighter weight because that means fat people can't touch me."

The "fat people" reference is to offensive linemen.

"They'd rather deal with and tug on a Phillip Dillard, who weighs 260, because they won't be able to put a hand on me," McKeon said. "I take speed over size any day."

Actually, Dillard is listed at 250, and can run well for his size.

The linebackers worked on becoming a better "hands team" during the spring, in part to compensate for the departure of veteran ends Adam Carriker and Jay Moore, according to McKeon.

"We don't have the giants up front anymore, so we've got to be able to use our length and our hands," he said. "Usually I just juke the guard and let him fall on his face, and I make the play."

"Now I'm using my hands, getting into guys, pushing

15 STEVE OCTAVIEN

Weakside Linebacker

6-0/240

Sr./One Letter

Naples, Fla.

Octavien, hampered by injuries throughout his career, played in nine games last season while battling a nagging leg injury. He finished with 32 tackles, including four tackles for loss and one sack.



40 LANCE BRANDENBURGH

Linebacker

6-1/230

Sr./Three Letters

Overland Park, Kan.

Brandenburgh, who has lined up at all three linebacker spots in his career, played in all 14 games, including one start. He finished with 41 total tackles, the most among non-starters.



them back in holes, trying to use my non-size to my advantage, which doesn't make any sense. But it's really making me a better football player, being able to get into a bigger guy and push him in the hole so other guys can make plays."

McKeon is a coach's son. He played for dad Larry at Naperville North High School in suburban Chicago, so "his understanding of the game and how well he picked things up was very quick," said Cosgrove, who was convinced McKeon could be a solid middle linebacker.

"You want to get your best athletes on the field, and going into his redshirt sophomore year I knew he had ability, but it was a matter of him getting it done. He really responded."

In the Big 12, with few fullbacks to take on, "you don't need a big, thick middle linebacker," Cosgrove said. "Naturally, you'd like guys a little bit bigger (there).

"But he feels comfortable at 230, 235. And that's all he needs to be."

Even so, Cosgrove is always asking about his weight, said McKeon. "He says, 'Get your weight up.' But then he's telling Steve (Octavien) at 240 to get his weight down, so you never know. There's always that fluctuation. You want to be a crisp 230. A lot of college, and even the NFL, they're not looking for devastating linebackers. They want linebackers that can run, make plays, avoid (blockers).

"So that's what I work on." ■



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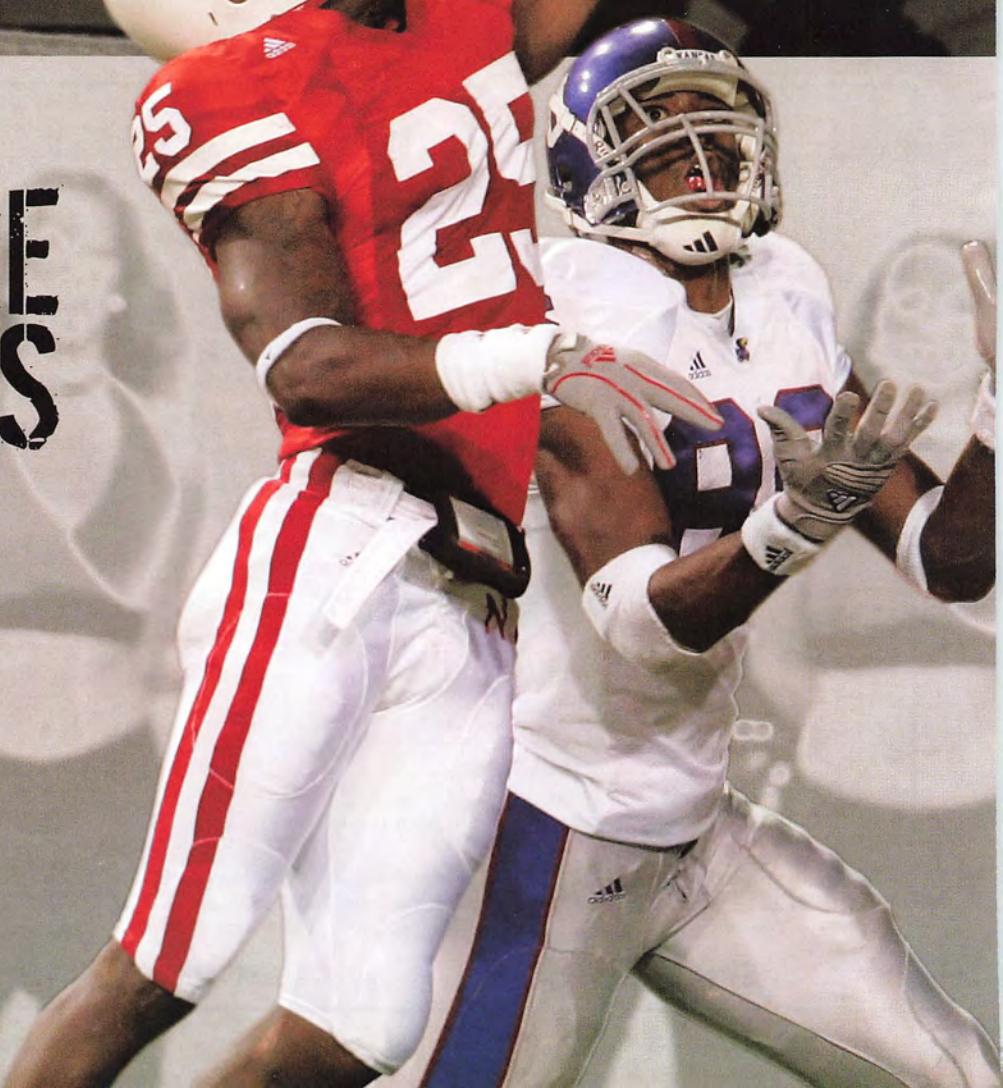


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ANDRE JONES



NU WAS LIKE HEAVEN

s this heaven?

No, it's Nebraska.

But as far as Cornhusker cornerback Andre Jones is concerned, they're one in the same. He never could have imagined things would turn out as great as they have.

Envision him surviving on Ramen noodles, more meals than not, because they're inexpensive, filing and answering phones on a work-study program to pay out-of-state tuition and meet monthly bills, utilities, rent, living in an apartment because Fresno City College is a commuter school and has no dorms.

The Ramen noodles probably symbolize the experience best.

"That was a stage I'll never forget," Jones said. "Man, it was a beast."

Now envision him on scholarship at Nebraska, with access to the training table.

"When I came here, oh man, it was like heaven," he said.

Jones never imagined he would find his way to Nebraska when he graduated Choctawhatchee High School in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., and headed to Kentucky on scholarship.

He had offers from other Division I-A schools, LSU, Florida State and Florida among them, he said. "But all those guys had a lot of depth at the DB spot, and I knew I wouldn't see the field immediately. I wanted to go somewhere that I could be effective and my family could see me on TV."

Kentucky seemed a good fit. So he packed up and headed to Lexington.

Initially, the Kentucky decision seemed a good one. He played in three games as a true freshman before suffering a broken leg. His situation deteriorated after that.

Even though a medical redshirt would have given back his freshman season, he became discouraged by the injury, not being able to play. His grades slipped, and he lost his

AT A GLANCE

Returning

Cortney Grixby	5-9, 170	Sr.
Andre Jones	6-0, 190	Sr.
Zack Bowman	6-2, 200	Sr.
Ryan Ford	5-11, 175	So.
Tyler Kester	6-1, 205	Sr.
Anthony West	6-0, 195	RFr.

Incoming

Armando Murillo	6-0, 195	Jr.
Prince Amukamara	6-1, 180	Fr.
Eric Hagg	6-1, 195	Fr.
Shawn Sullivan	5-10, 190	Fr.

Outlook

Going into the spring, cornerback was regarded as a strength of the defense. Then, Zack Bowman went down with a ruptured right patellar tendon, and a degree of uncertainty returned.

However, coaches and teammates were optimistic that Bowman would be able to return, and quicker than the six-month prognosis. If that were to happen and Bowman could play at close to the way he did before suffering the torn ACL in his left knee, the position would be solid, with returning starters Cortney Grixby and Andre Jones and the addition of junior college transfer Armando Murillo.

Because of his size, a reasonably healthy Bowman would allow for more flexibility, including single coverage on one side with double coverage on the other. "You can't double both sides all of the time because you lose all of your run support," said defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove.

"We feel Zack (pre-injuries) is a guy who can handle one-on-one situations."

Murillo, of course, enrolled in January and went through spring practice, giving him a headstart, something that nei-

ther Bowman nor Jones, also junior college transfers, had.

Although Bowman's injury meant a greater opportunity, Murillo considered it a "big negative because, I mean, he's a beast. We need him. It's not like, 'Oh, this guy went down.' The way I feel about it is, we need this guy," Murillo said.

On the other hand, "if a guy like that goes down, I've got to step up," said Murillo. "I'm new around here, still learning. I've got the talent and speed. If I learn the system, it should be OK."

Even if Bowman is slow in returning, or can't return at close to full speed, Murillo's play during the spring was encouraging. "He's getting a lot better every day," Jones said. "He's doing real good out there, making plays. Coach loves him. We love him, welcome him in like family. The thing I love about him the most, he's a quiet guy. He doesn't spend much time talking. He just gets the job done."

Murillo impressed Bowman, too. In fact, going into the spring, Bowman suggested that Murillo had shown the athletic ability in the off-season program to be a starter. Adding him to the mix increased the competition at corner. "That's how teams become great," said Jones.

"That's why you have teams like Florida because they have so much depth back there at the DB spot, and they all compete. But at the same time they're teammates; they're encouraging each other. There's no jealousy within our DBs, our corners. We root for each other. Ain't no hating here."

After Bowman was injured, and Ryan Ford went down as well, Anthony West returned to cornerback from safety, where he had moved at the beginning of spring practice.

West, who has 4.5 speed and figures in the nickel package, "really developed himself and worked hard to improve himself in the off-season," coach Bill Callahan said.

In addition, five freshman defensive backs will join the competition in training camp, whether at cornerback or safety. Two were recruited as "athletes," Prince Amukamara and Eric Hagg.

2 CORTNEY GRIXBY

Cornerback

5-9/170

Sr./Three Letters

Omaha, Neb.

Grixby, a two-year starter, finished with 53 total tackles, and his 42 solo stops were second among Husker defenders. He also led the defense with 11 pass breakups, bettering his 2005 total by one.



14 ZACK BOWMAN

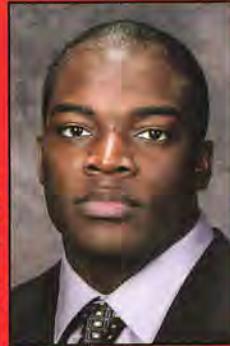
Cornerback

6-2/200

Sr./One Letter

Anchorage, Alaska

Bowman, who missed last season recovering from a torn ACL, went down again with a ruptured patellar tendon early in the spring, which was expected to sideline him for six months.



25 ANDRE JONES

Cornerback

6-0/190

Sr./One Letter

Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.

Jones was thrown into the fire when Zack Bowman was injured and started 13 games in his first season at NU. He had 74 tackles to rank second on the team, while his 52 solo stops led the defense.



5 ARMANDO MURILLO

Cornerback

6-0/195

Jr./No Letters

Tampa, Fla.

Murillo enrolled in January and went through spring practice after transferring from Eastern Arizona Community College. He was impressive in helping fill in for the injured Zack Bowman.



scholarship.

He decided he needed a change of scenery, which is how he got to Fresno City College. A Kentucky assistant knew coaches there and helped him make the initial contact.

At first, Jones was skeptical about going all the way to California. The distance from home was a consideration, though not the most significant one. Jones comes from a military family, so he was used to moving around the country. Among other places, he had lived in the Oklahoma City area and played youth league football with Oklahoma State's Donovan Woods and brothers D'Juan and Rashaun.

The biggest concern about going to a California community college was financial. "I'm like, 'I don't have that kind of money,'" said Jones. "But God works in mysterious ways."

"Something came through, and I'm packing up and leaving."

Once there, he had to adjust to a lifestyle to which he wasn't accustomed. The West Coast "was totally different," he said. "It was so much faster, as far as the people. I'm more of a laid-back, chill person, and you had to be on your grind out there or you'd be left behind. It was an experience."

And a positive experience as it turned out, Ramen noodles notwithstanding.

"I loved it. I had a great position coach, man. I had a great head coach, a great year. I don't have anything negative to say about it. I enjoyed it so much out there," he said.

After two seasons at Fresno City College, and three games against San Francisco City College and wide receiver Maurice Purify, Jones headed to Nebraska as a five-star recruit.

He was expected to contribute immediately but with time to adjust because of two experienced corners, Cortney Grixby and Zack Bowman, like Jones a five-star recruit out

of junior college who began his first season as the nickel back before becoming the starter in the eighth game.

Bowman suffered a season-ending knee injury early in preseason practice, however, and Jones found himself on the field with the top unit, trying to learn on the run. "My biggest thing was the terminology that they would use," he said. "I wouldn't know what it meant."

Cornerbacks coach Phil Elmassian "would say something like, 'He's running the seam,'" said Jones. "And I'm looking like . . . I'm nodding my head at him like, 'Yeh, yeh, yeh.'

"But when it comes, I don't know what he's talking about. I didn't have a clue."

He learned quickly, however, and started all but the Big 12 championship game, which the Cornhuskers opened in a goal-line defense. He finished as the team's second-leading tackler, behind strongside linebacker Stewart Bradley, and second to Grixby in pass break-ups.

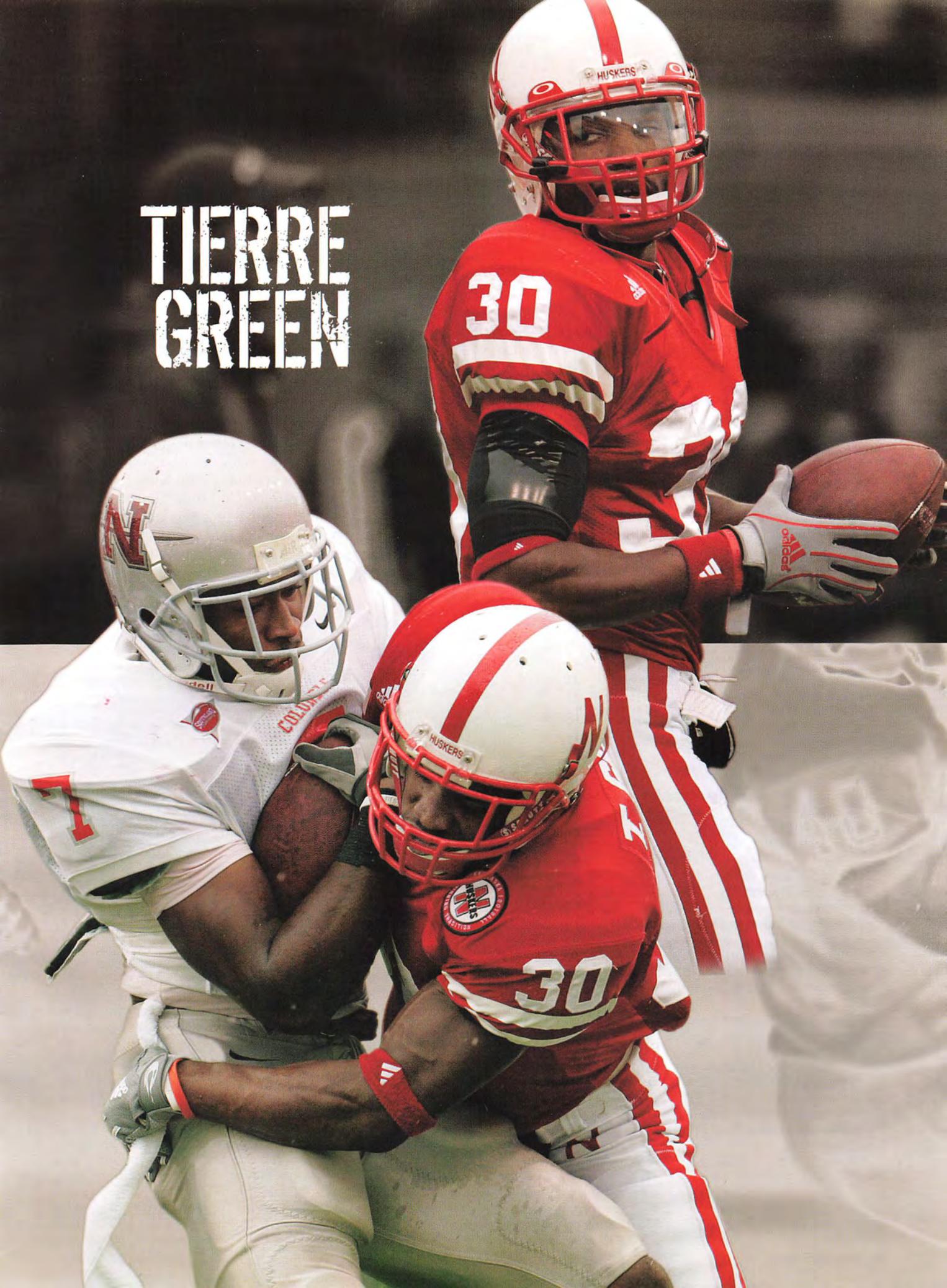
He and Grixby received their share of fan criticism, as Nebraska ranked 10th in the Big 12 in pass defense in conference games (though second in pass efficiency defense).

Jones shook it off. "It is what it is," he said. "People are going to talk. Criticism, I've done it. It's not a good thing to criticize, but people will do it. When you do good, there's still going to be criticism, you know what I'm saying? So I just try to put that behind me and focus on my teammates."

Criticism or not, he couldn't imagine a better situation, a better place to be. "If you would have told me my life would turn out this way, I never would have believed it because all of the routes I had to take go get where I'm at," Jones said. "Everything happens for a reason. Now I'm here."

As far as he's concerned, it's a little bit of heaven, and no Ramen noodles." ■

TIERRE GREEN



ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES

No, Tierre Green hasn't suffered an identity crisis along the way.

He was comfortable at running back. He moved willingly to cornerback. And he figured the experience at cornerback gave him an edge in a final switch to safety.

In any case, he never complained or was frustrated by the position changes.

"I've always been the type of guy that just rolled with the punches," he said. "I try not to take too many, but in this type of situation you have to do what you feel is best."

And from his point of view whatever was best for the team would be best for him.

Sure, he would have benefited from playing the same position throughout his Cornhusker career. But all's well that ends well, and "I think I fell into the right spot," Green

said.

Actually, the verb "fell" doesn't do him justice. The changes weren't random attempts to find where he could fit in. Rather, they were an indication of his athleticism and adaptability. In fact, he was recruited as an athlete rather than at a specific position, indicating what could, and did, happen.

He was rated a two-star recruit, though he didn't find out until after he got to Nebraska. He has never paid attention to such rankings, though he made an exception during the Cornhuskers' recruitment of his cousin, Niles Paul, a highly regarded wide receiver (four stars) from Omaha.

"I hear people talk about who's this and who's that. It doesn't really appeal to me," said Green. "I'm about our team and the guys that come here. If they (the coaches) ask me to host a guy, I'm going to give him what's real about the

AT A GLANCE

Returning

Tierre Green	6-1, 200	Sr.
Bryan Wilson	6-1, 205	Sr.
Ben Eisenhart	5-11, 200	Sr.
Rickey Thenarse	6-0, 190	So.
Corey Young	6-0, 195	So.
Matt O'Hanlon	5-11, 200	Jr.
Adam Watson	6-0, 185	Rfr.

Incoming

Larry Asante	6-1, 210	So.
Anthony Blue	5-10, 175	Fr.
Latravis Washington	6-3, 210	Fr.

Outlook

"Let's get physical" could have served as the safeties' theme during the spring.

"Definitely, we were real physical," senior Bryan Wilson told reporters following the Spring Game. "From the front end to the back end, we knew we had to be physical."

"It wasn't a question of when or why or how; we just had to mentally come in and be physical from day one, get our hands on receivers, put our bodies on them, knock balls loose."

Wilson didn't just talk about being more physical, he was, and he positioned himself to be in the rotation, along with returning starter Tierre Green, who technically was moved from strong to free safety, even though the emphasis will be on the safeties' having the ability to play either.

Larry Asante, a transfer from Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College who enrolled in January and participated in spring practice, lived up to his reputation for physical play.

"We're going to bring that back this season," said Asante, who signed a letter of intent with Virginia out of high school, expecting to play running back. "Beginning (with) game one, we've got to put fear in the receivers' hearts. We can't have those receivers running free across

the middle.

"We've got to kill them every time they come across the middle."

Though hampered by a tweaked hamstring, Asante quickly established himself. His determination was such that he constantly sent text messages to defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove, asking about what he needed to do to get better. "I'm all about perfection," Asante said.

He wants to "know everything like the back of my hand," he said.

Asante, who has three seasons of eligibility, still thought he would be a running back when he went to Coffeyville Community College, but there were so many at the position that he agreed to switch to defense. He lined up as a linebacker as well as a safety, earning junior college All-America honorable mention.

"He's a physical presence out there," said Cosgrove.

So is sophomore Rickey Thenarse, who distinguished himself as a hard-hitter on special teams as a true freshman. Thenarse was recruited as a safety, moved to cornerback and then returned to safety in the spring. "He's got some length," said cornerbacks coach Phil Elmassian.

"He's more of a safety. I think he's got a chance."

Coach Bill Callahan agreed. "He's a physical, collision player," Callahan said. "It gives you a player who's aggressive, that can come down and lay the wood on somebody and is a sure tackler."

Sure tackling also was an emphasis in the spring, according to Wilson, for the cornerbacks as well as the safeties. "Last year we knew as a secondary we left a lot of plays on the field," he said.

Senior Ben Eisenhart knows the system and has established himself as an aggressive special-teams player, as has sophomore Corey Young, who missed spring practice because of a shoulder injury. "I think you find out about your players when they're on special teams," said Elmassian.

"Special teams are a reflection of your defense, so it's helped them."

30 TIERRE GREEN

Safety

6-1/200

Sr./Three Letters

Omaha, Neb.

Green, who settled in at safety and started all 14 games, tied for fourth with 65 total tackles, including 37 solo stops. He has played in all 37 games over the past three seasons with 24 starts.



9 BRYAN WILSON

Safety

6-1/205

Sr./One Letter

Granada Hills, Calif.

Wilson worked at cornerback a year ago, before settling in at strong safety in the spring. He played well in the Red-White Spring Game, finishing with nine tackles for the White squad.



4 LARRY ASANTE

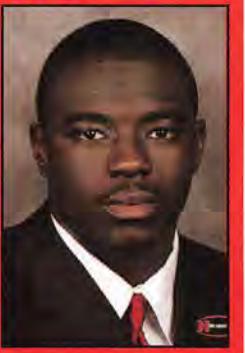
Safety

6-1/210

So./No Letters

Alexandria, Va.

Asante, a transfer from Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College who enrolled in January and participated in spring practice, lived up to his reputation for physical play. He has three seasons to play.



program; we're going in the right direction."

And attitudes such as his have helped guide it there.

Green grew up a Nebraska fan and never wanted to play anywhere else. His cousin Ahman Green (1995-97) was a Cornhusker as was an uncle, Mike Green (1968-69). Both were running backs, and his first two seasons it appeared he would be following in their footsteps.

Though he hoped to play right away, as most do, he redshirted as a freshman, which meant the coaches who recruited him were gone when his opportunity finally came.

The coaching change was "really tough," he said. "At first, you kind of have this attitude, 'Man, I want to leave.' It's natural when you develop an attachment to certain people."

Because of his affection for Nebraska football as a youngster, his attachment was based on more than recruiting and a redshirt season. "You think (when) people watch football, they watch the players. But I watched everyone. I watched the coaches," he said. "I knew who everyone was."

His disappointment quickly gave way to practicality, however.

"I knew I had to do what was best for me," Green said. "I knew I had to develop some sort of relationship with the current coaches because that's who I was going to be involved with for much longer. I've developed great relationships with the coaching staff we have now."

Given the position changes, he probably knows more of the assistant coaches better than most players. He's been coached by Randy Jordan, Phil Elmassian and now Bill Busch.

Green could have been a good running back. He rushed for 112 yards in his first game and averaged 6.5 yards per carry, sharing second-team duties behind Cory Ross.

His second season, he started the first seven games at cor-

nerback while newly arrived Zack Bowman adjusted from junior college. Then he moved to safety for his third season, starting every game and making 65 tackles to tie Bo Ruud for fourth on the team and earn all-conference honorable mention.

Green also has returned kickoffs and gotten carries on trick plays each of the past two seasons. Whatever he could do to help the team he has done, without complaint or question.

As mentioned earlier, his goal in high school was to get to Nebraska. But "I couldn't just necessarily say, 'I'm going to Nebraska regardless,'" he said. "I needed to have school paid for, and if that wasn't here, I'd have to go somewhere else. I needed to go wherever the best fit was for me."

Had Nebraska not offered a scholarship, he probably would have gone to Iowa State. He's a self-described realist. "I look at things in a logical way; I try to," said Green.

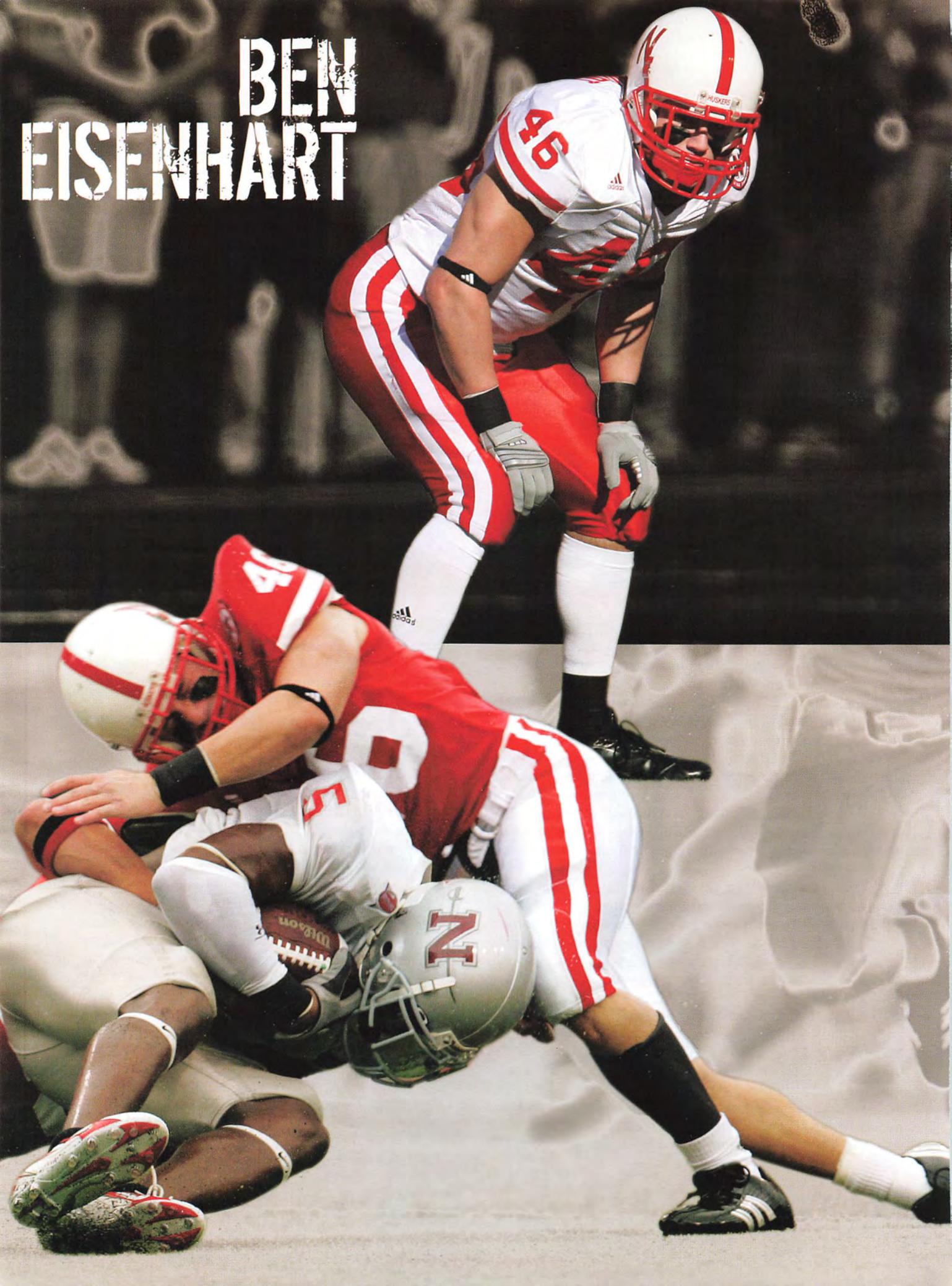
He was never naïve about what would happen. "I thought if I worked hard, I could become a great player, and at the time it was at running back. I still believe if they told me to go to running back right now, I'd come out in the season fighting for some legitimate playing time," he said. "If they asked me, and this is kind of bizarre, but if they asked me to play anything from tight end to quarterback, whatever, I think if I worked on it, I could do it. I just feel if it's possible in my mind, then go ahead and try it."

Green also looks at his educational opportunities logically, which is why he might put off graduation. He's on schedule to finish a degree in sociology in December, he said. But he has been contemplating adding a second major, possibly doing more coursework in communications.

"Obviously, that can go a lot of different ways," he said.

A double major would be a little like playing multiple positions. ■

BEN EISENHART



WHAT FOOTBALL IS ALL ABOUT

When practice was finished, Ben Eisenhart and Tyler Kester would return to the dorm room they shared as freshmen at Nebraska and commiserate with each other. They had common backgrounds. Both were walk-ons from small towns in Nebraska, Eisenhart from Culbertson and Kester from Clearwater. Both had played eight-man football.

The difference was, Kester was a punter while Eisenhart was a safety, which meant practicing on the scout team, "getting totally beat down by the first-string offensive line," said Eisenhart.

"He was just out there punting. We used to give each other crap about that."

The practice demands on a punter are much different than

those on a position player. For example, Kester didn't have to deal with Nick Povendo on a daily basis. Povendo was a junior, a 6-foot-3, 300-pound offensive lineman who apparently had little use for scout-team walk-ons.

Eisenhart remembers him as "probably the meanest" of the linemen.

It should be mentioned here, however, that Richie Incognito was in a class by himself, and not just among offensive linemen. "He was the scariest of all," Eisenhart said. "You just didn't even want to mess with him. Nobody messed with Richie. You knew that right from the beginning. You need a few guys like that on your team."

Eisenhart has kept in touch with Incognito, who now plays in the NFL.

"He's one of the best linemen I've ever seen," said Eisenhart.

AT A GLANCE

Returning Place-Kickers

Alex Henery	6-2, 170	RFr.
Jake Wesch	6-1, 200	Jr.
*Daniel Lee	6-0, 195	Jr.

Punters

Dan Titchener	6-0, 200	Jr.
Michael Such	6-2, 205	RFr.

Long-Snappers

T.J. O'Leary	6-1, 245	Jr.
Justin Baumgartner	6-2, 255	Jr.
Nathan McBride	6-1, 205	So.
Robbie McEwen	6-0, 235	Jr.

Incoming Place-Kickers

Adi Kunalic	6-0, 175	Fr.
*Transfer, redshirting in the fall		

Outlook

Alex Henery finished spring practice as the No. 1 place-kicker, ahead of junior Jake Wesch, but the redshirted freshman walk-on will have to hold the job in pre-season practice when freshman scholarship recruit Adi Kunalic joins the competition following Jordan Congdon's surprise departure.

Congdon, who earned freshman All-America recognition after making a school-record 19 field goals (in 23 attempts) in 2005, was called on to attempt only seven field goals during his sophomore season, making five, the longest from 40 yards. He made 55-of-56 extra-point kicks.

The spring emphasis was on consistency from 45 yards and in.

Congdon also handled kickoffs early but gave way to Wesch, who averaged 61.1 yards on 33, with eight touchbacks. "We're very confident in Jake on his kickoffs," said coach Bill Callahan.

Wesch also will join the punting competition in the fall,

Callahan said, though Dan Titchener is the returning starter, averaging 39.3 yards on 66 punts, 26 of them downed inside the 20-yard line. In addition, Michael Such could be a factor. He averaged 48.4 yards on seven punts in the Spring Game.

Henery is focusing on place-kicking even though he came to Nebraska expecting to punt. The former soccer player averaged 41.1 yards per punt to lead the state's large-schools classification as a senior at Omaha Burke High. His longest field goal in high school was 48 yards as a sophomore.

He didn't get to attempt many during his career because "our offense was pretty good," he said.

Henery was the on-sides kick specialist in the fall until a point in the regular season at which the coaches "didn't want to blow my redshirt," he said. "I think it was like two or three games left."

Even so, had he been asked to give up the redshirt for an on-sides kick against, say, Colorado, he would have done it, he said. "You never know if you'll get on the field after that."

Callahan emphasized kickoff returns during the spring. The Cornhuskers, who haven't had a kickoff return for a touchdown since 1998, ranked No. 112 nationally, with only 28 returns. Also, the rules change that will have teams kicking off from the 30-yard line instead of the 35 will have a significant effect. "That area has to measure up and be more consistent," said Callahan.

Nebraska ranked seventh in the Big 12 and 69th nationally in punt returns and 10th in the conference in kickoff coverage. Safeties Ben Eisenhart and Rickey Thenarse, whom the coaches chose as special teams MVP, are sure tacklers on the coverage teams. Eisenhart was credited with nine solo tackles, tops among players primarily on special teams, while Thenarse earned a reputation for making big hits.

He wants opponents to remember his hits, and his jersey number. "I know they're going to key in on me this year," Thenarse said. "But it doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter."

Last season's primary punt returners are back, Terrence Nunn and Courtney Grixby. And Marlon Lucky was a regular on kickoff returns along with the departed Brandon Jackson.

90 ALEX HENERY

Place-Kicker

6-2/170

RFr./No Letters

Omaha, Neb.

Henary finished spring practice as the No. 1 place-kicker but will face competition in the fall from recruit Adi Kunalic and junior Jake Wesch. He came to NU expecting to punt after leading the state as a senior.



98 JAKE WESCH

Punter/Place-Kicker

6-1/200

Jr./One Letter

North Bend, Neb.

Wesch has handled most of the kickoff duties the past two years. His biggest play came on a fake field-goal, when he hit tight end Hunter Teafatiller with a 17-yard touchdown pass vs. Kansas State.



97 DAN TITCHENER

Punter

6-0/200

Jr./One Letter

Cheyenne, Wyo.

Titchener averaged 39.3 yards, helping NU rank 24th nationally in net punting. Five of his punts sailed more than 50 yards, and he pinned opponents inside their own 20-yard line 26 times.



46 BEN EISENHART

Safety/Special Teams

5-11/200

Sr./Two Letters

Culbertson, Neb.

Eisenhart had nine solo tackles, the most among Huskers with the majority of their playing time on special teams. Originally a walk-on, he was awarded a scholarship at the start of 2006 fall camp.



In any case, he could avoid Incognito, a center. But he couldn't avoid Povendo, a tackle who would grab him and throw him down, and when he'd get up, Povendo would throw him back down.

"He was always picking on us," Eisenhart said.

Oh yes, Eisenhart weighed about 175 pounds when he arrived at Nebraska. He weighs 200 pounds now, and he's considerably stronger. He might not be strong enough to toss around 300-pound offensive linemen. But when he gets up a head of steam, he can do some damage to a ball carrier.

And though he's gregarious off the field, with a ready smile and up-beat attitude, he has a hard edge when the ball is in play, reflected by his affection for special teams. He was a regular on kickoff, kickoff return and punt return and occasionally saw action on the punt team last season.

He hopes to be on all four this season. That's a no-brainer as far as he's concerned.

"I don't understand how you can like football and not want to be on special teams," he said. "Special teams are the most pure aspect of football. I mean, you run hard, you hit hard and you tackle. That's basically what special teams are, and to me that's what football is."

"Special teams are the most fun you can have in a game."

Special teams have enabled him to play in 26 games the past two seasons and earn not only two letters but also a scholarship, which he received prior to last season. Had someone told him when he walked on that he would accomplish what he has, he would have been "totally surprised," he said.

"That's something I can be proud of. I've had a great time."

He began at the bottom of the depth chart in 2003, Frank Solich's final season as coach. "Basically, you couldn't start any farther down than I did," he said. "But I was never real-

ly that intimidated. I knew that having a little ability and a lot of determination I could make my way up."

The bottom of the depth chart was lower, simply because there were a lot more players on the team then than there are now. "When I came in here, we had like 180 guys," Eisenhart said. "Now you come in and the worst you are is fourth team. You came in then and you were like ninth string."

Practices were organized differently, too, with separate stations for running, passing and options as well as scout teams for each. "There were so many guys on the team that some didn't even show up to practice and no one ever knew," he said. "If you had something to do, class or whatever . . ."

Some players would show up for individual drills and then leave.

"I knew older guys that once period 10 came along their practice was over," he said.

When Bill Callahan arrived, he told the team in his first meeting that he couldn't do what he wanted to do with so many players and that the size of the squad would have to be reduced.

However, Callahan didn't "really cut anybody," Eisenhart said. Rather, the first two weeks of the off-season conditioning program were so intense "people wanted to quit."

It was two weeks "of basically hell. It was terrible," he said. "That was the worst two weeks I've ever gone through in my entire life, by far. That just weeded out people."

Those two weeks are a distant memory for Eisenhart, who never wavered in his determination to play for the Cornhuskers. So are the nights spent with Kester (now a cornerback) lamenting practice.

"The dorms are something that . . . I wouldn't do it again," said Eisenhart.

"But I'm definitely glad I did it. We had a lot of fun." ■

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Alive and... Walk-ons say reports of demise have been greatly exaggerated

By Mike Babcock

During his pre-spring news conference in late March, Bill Callahan made special mention of walk-ons Andy Poulosky, Thomas Rice and Tony Sullivan. Those three, all senior defensive ends, distinguished themselves on the scout team during the fall, Callahan said. The coaches picked Sullivan, who's from Wahoo, Neb. (Bishop Neumann High School), as the defensive scout team MVP.

"Those three guys have given us fits in our preparation," said Callahan. "Those are really fine football players, and they'll add some contribution and value to our team before it's all said and done."

That Callahan would comment on players whose contributions to the team are mostly behind the scenes — Sullivan and Rice have yet to play in a game and Poulosky has seen action in only seven games, six last season — is evidence of the continued value of Nebraska's walk-on program.

Callahan was criticized for a lack of appreciation of walk-ons during his first season as coach. But the number of players was unwieldy and needed to be reduced, said Rice, who estimates there were more than 170 players on the team when winter conditioning began in 2004.

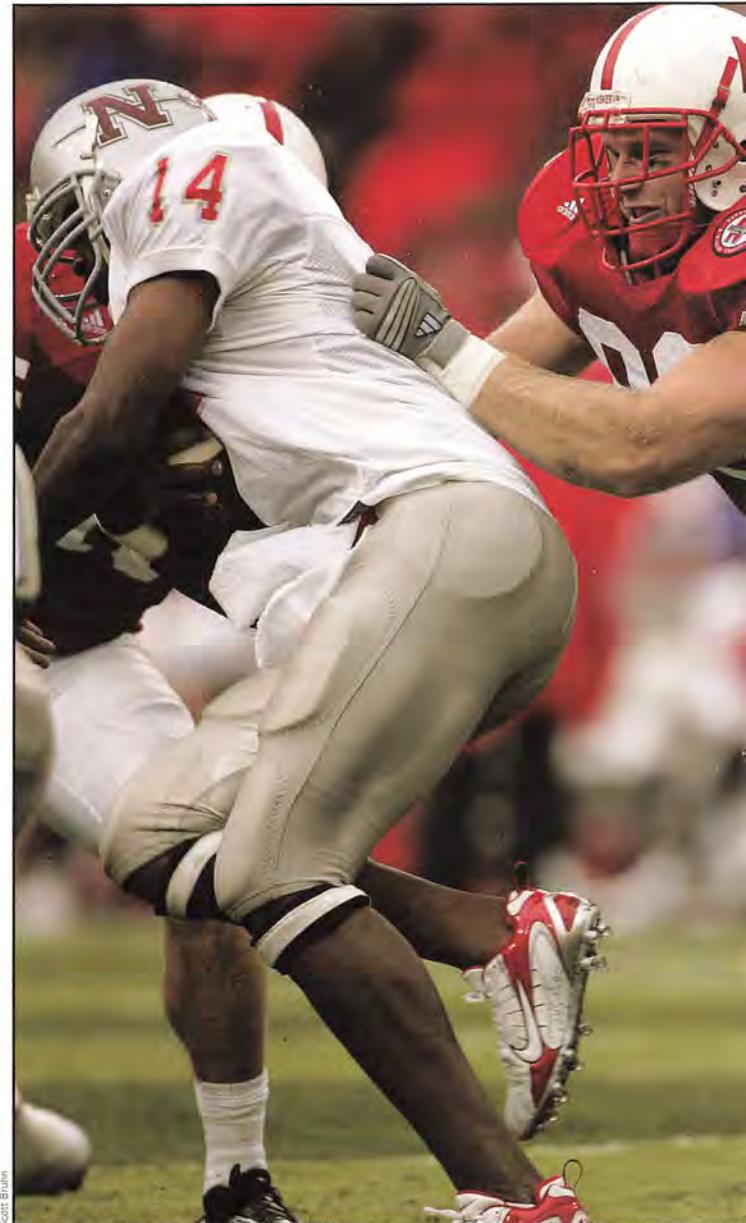
"That's way too many people," he said.

Callahan didn't cut players at random, however, according to Rice. Rather, many players cut themselves during the first two rigorous weeks of the conditioning program.

And he didn't discriminate against walk-ons. Everyone was treated the same.

"You kind of just got the sense that if you made it through those two weeks and did the best you could do, they were going to keep you," Rice said. "It would show you really loved the game and you were willing to go through all of this and work hard. So why would they get rid of you?"

"We were all kind of nervous because we didn't know what was going on. All we could do was work hard. But that's really the spirit of a walk-on, someone who's been told they may not be the biggest or the best, but 'come



Scott Brun
Walk-on defensive end Andy Poulosky (86) played in six games last season as a junior.

here and work hard and we'll give you a chance.' "

The Cornhuskers' walk-on tradition has been well-documented, from Langston Coleman's hitch-hiking from Washington, D.C., in the early 1960s to play for Bob Devaney to Isaiah Hipp's borrowing money for a plane ticket to come from Chapin, S.C., to ask Tom Osborne for a chance.

More recently, Stewart Bradley walked on from Salt Lake City, was awarded a scholarship after his first season and left as a third-round draft pick of the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles.

nd well



Andy Poulosky, Defensive End 6-2, 260, Sr. Ponca, Neb.

Poulosky was 8- or 9-years-old when he attended his first Nebraska football game. He remembers that the weather was "miserable," rain falling, and that he sat in Section 33. He also remembers sitting in the snow to watch the Cornhuskers play Oklahoma in late November of 1993.

At about that same age, he imagined himself playing for Nebraska someday.

"It's one of those goals you set when you're younger. I want to do that," he said. "They had a lot of great talent, great teams here when I was growing up. It inspired me to try to come here."

He was inspired, especially, by Gerald Armstrong, a senior tight end in 1993. Armstrong, who had walked on, was from Ponca. "He was a hometown hero," Poulosky said.

Several non-Division I-A schools, among them Nebraska-Omaha, Northern Iowa, North Dakota and Chadron State, recruited him, Poulosky said. They offered scholarship aid.

On a recruiting trip to the University of South Dakota, which plays its home games in the DakotaDome, he told his dad, he just wasn't interested. "Next thing I know, Nebraska called and asked me to walk on," he said. "I said, 'There you go; that was pretty easy.' My mind was made up."

He remembers his introduction to Cornhusker football as a freshman on the scout team, too, vividly. He got caught by an "influence trap play," he said, with fullback Dane Todd leading the way.

Todd faked a block on him, giving way to a guard, whose name he doesn't recall.

"He just rolled me," said Poulosky. "I'll remember that for the rest of my life. That's just part of it. I've built a lot of great memories with the players here, the coaches and whatnot."

Even though he has seen only limited action on special teams, he has taken on leadership responsibilities, a fact noted by new defensive line coach Buddy Wyatt in the spring. He and sophomore tackle Ndamukong Suh emerged as the leaders of the line, Wyatt said.

Tim McFadden, the football team's administrative assistant of technology, conducted leadership seminars during the offseason, and "we talked about how anybody, it doesn't matter how deep you are on the depth chart or how much you play, you can be a leader," said Poulosky. "We lost four guys up front from last year, and somebody had to take the reins. It's a role you can either take or pass up."

"I was ready to take it. It's not a hard role for me. Some people say they're just natural leaders. I try to lead the best I can, be the best example and get a lot of people to follow."

His attitude is certainly exemplary. "To be a walk-on is an honor," he said.

"I might not be getting a scholarship check, but it doesn't matter. I'm living my dream, doing what I wanted to do, playing for the team that I always wanted to play for."

Callahan's appreciation for walk-ons is reflected in the fact that the last two years on letter-of-intent-signing day the list of recruits has included not only those who have accepted scholarship offers but also a handful of players accepted by the university and planning to walk on.

"The walk-on program here at Nebraska is still alive and well," Poulosky said. "Coach Callahan has done a great job. He treats everybody the same. If you're a starter, a scholarship guy, or the last guy on the depth chart, a walk-on, it doesn't matter. Coach is going to treat you the same."

Briefly, here are three who represent the positives of that program:

Justin Makovicka, Fullback 6-1, 235, RFr. Ulysses, Neb.

Nebraska football is a family affair for Makovicka. He was preceded by brothers Jeff and Joel, both of whom walked on, played fullback and earned four letters after redshirting. Oh yes, and both played for two national championship teams, Jeff in 1994 and 1995, Joel in 1995 and 1997.

"As far as I can remember, I've been going to Nebraska games," said Justin, a two-time Class C-2 all-state running back at East Butler High. "I don't really remember ever not going to a game."

He and his younger brother, Jordan (yes, there's another), were on a television news report from the lobby of the team hotel in Miami the year the Cornhuskers won their first national championship under coach Tom Osborne following the 1994 season. He and Jordan were asleep.

"I think back then you didn't really realize your brothers were playing for Nebraska. I mean, you did, but now looking back on it, you realize how special it was," Justin said.

"You just kind of grew up and that's all you really knew."

He never missed a game, home or away. For road games, his parents would take him out of school on Friday and on the next Monday, he would recount the experience for his classmates.

Despite growing up with Nebraska football, however, Justin considered going to Iowa State. Then-Cyclones coach Dan McCarney offered a scholarship and flew to Nebraska to visit him.

If not for the scholarship, he wouldn't have had a decision to make. But McCarney had visited just a couple of days before letters of intent could be signed, and had pointed out that Iowa State's fullback had scored a lot of touchdowns the previous season. "It was really close," said Justin.

The day after McCarney's visit, however, Cornhusker coach Bill Callahan and running backs coach Randy Jordan came to East Butler High, and Justin decided to walk on as his brothers had.

"I'm glad I decided to come here, really glad," he said.

He played on the scout team as a redshirt, of course, beginning as a fullback but finishing as a running back. He was named offensive scout team player of the week twice. In the spring, his focus was fullback, which he had played some in high school but never as a blocker, except in pass protection. Otherwise, he was a ball carrier, rushing for nearly 3,200 yards and 33 touchdowns his final two seasons.

"It's been a transition-kind of year, learning to block, techniques and stuff," Justin said.

He was a multi-sport athlete in high school. But football was his first choice. "Baseball and basketball, to me, take a second seat to football. I think it's the man's game," he said.

"I've always liked football the best. I grew up with it."

More specifically, he grew up with Cornhusker football, a family affair.



Justin Makovicka

Thomas Rice, Defensive End 6-1, 240, Sr. Lincoln, Neb.

Rice watched his first Nebraska football game on a small television set in an ice shack in South Dakota. He and his dad were ice fishing on New Year's night, 1994, when the Cornhuskers lost against Florida State in the Orange Bowl game, with the national championship at stake.

"I thought it was a pretty good game," Rice said.

He might not have given the Cornhuskers another thought, however, if his dad, a civil engineer, hadn't announced a couple of weeks later that the family would be moving from South Dakota to Lincoln, Neb. And once in Lincoln, his family bought

Nebraska football season tickets, which meant he watched, in person, as the Cornhuskers won national championships in 1994, 1995 and 1997.

"I got to see some amazing athletes on some amazing teams," he said.

With that background, he couldn't pass up an opportunity to walk on, despite recruiting interest from several smaller schools, as a wrestler as well as a football player.

Rice, who wrestled on two Class A state championship teams at Lincoln East High School, began wrestling when he was a first-grader in South Dakota, trying it because his friends did. He was immediately hooked. "Once you become a wrestler, I think it's easy to lose yourself in the sport, once you understand it and know what all goes into it," he said. "I don't think you ever get rid of that appreciation."

"But it's always been kind of a second love for me."

Though his first love, athletically, has always been football, wrestling has shaped the determination that has served him so well as a walk-on. He has yet to play in a game at Nebraska, "but I knew that risk when I came here," he said. "There's no guarantee you'll ever get a chance to play."

Even so, "if I work my butt off every day, I know I gave it my best and I can't be upset with myself. I think that goes back to wrestling. I've been told it's not the goal but the journey because you will run into someone who's better than you. My goal is to do the best I can and help this team be better. If that means I play on the scout team for five years, I play scout team for five years. I've accepted that."

Rice joined the wrestling team this season, after heavyweight Jon May was injured. When he was asked, "I didn't really have to think twice," Rice said. "I missed it, and I also knew it would help me get in shape for football. It really taught me a lot about myself and how hard I need to work."

Because of wrestling, he didn't consider the start of winter conditioning when coach Bill Callahan arrived in 2004 as the negative experience most did. He enjoyed the challenge and appreciated the fact that Callahan and his assistants were there bright and early with the athletes.

That "spoke volumes" about the new coaching staff, said Rice. "It would have been easier for Coach Callahan to say, 'Hey, Coach K (strength coach Dave Kennedy), I want you to put all these guys through the workouts, and I want you to see who's still standing at the end of two weeks.' "

But the coaches were there at 4:30 a.m. when tapping of the players began.

Rice was among those who arrived the earliest, always fearing he would be late.

He's honest about his situation. He's small for a defensive end. "And I know I'm not the most athletic kid in the world," he said. "What drives me is knowing I did my best."

If he can say that when his career is finished, "I have no regrets." ■

2007 WALK-ONS

The following players, all from Nebraska, have accepted admission to the university and have indicated they will walk on in the fall. The list is not definitive, of course. Others could be added, and those on the list still could go elsewhere.

Austin Cassidy	DB
6-1, 205	Lincoln
Taylor Escamilla	DL
6-1, 275	Fremont
Ben Franzluebbers	DL
6-4, 245	Dodge
Thomas Grove	RB/LB
6-2, 190	Arlington
Cory Iske	OL
6-2, 260	Omaha
Ben Lester	WR
5-10, 160	Tecumseh
Luke Lingenfelter	DE
6-4, 240	Plainview
Mike Masin	OL
6-7, 320	Lincoln
Matthew May	FS/RB
6-1, 195	Imperial
Kevin Thomsen	FB/DL
6-2, 245	Elkhorn
Lance Thorell	RB/DB
6-1, 180	Loomis

2007 ROSTER

Source: Huskers.com

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown (school)	20	Lucky, Marlon	IB	6-0	210	Jr.	North Hollywood, Calif.	
95	Allen, Pierre	DL	6-5	265	RFr.	Denver, Colo. (Thom. Jefferson)	89	Luhrs, Kevin	DE	6-1	270	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)	
	Amukamara, Prince	DB	6-1	180	Fr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Apollo)	35	Makovicka, Justin	FB	6-1	235	RFr.	Brainard, Neb. (East Butler)	
4	Asante, Larry	S	6-1	210	So.	Alexandria, Va. (Coffeyville, Kan., CC)	63	Martin, Ben	DT	6-4	270	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)	
56	Barfield, Shukree	DT	6-4	310	Jr.	Camden, N.J. (Garden City, Kan., CC)	55	McBride, Nathan	LS	6-1	205	So.	Scottsdale, Ariz. (Chaparral)	
66	Barrett, Cruz	OL	6-4	325	RFr.	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)	78	McEwen, Robbie	LS	6-0	235	Jr.	North Platte, Neb. (Drake Univ.)	
56	Baumgartner, Justin	LS	6-2	255	Jr.	Cheyenne, Wyo. (Chadron St./Laramie Co., Wyo., CC)	13	McKeon, Corey	LB	6-1	225	Sr.	Naperville, Ill. (North)	
57	Bergland, Dennis	OL	6-1	290	RFr.	Plattsmouth, Neb.	58	McNeill, Andy	LB	6-1	245	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Skutt)	
	Blue, Anthony	DB	5-10	175	Fr.	Cedar Hill, Texas	44	McNeill, Mike	TE	6-4	225	RFr.	Kirkwood, Mo.	
14	Bowman, Zackary	CB	6-2	200	Sr.	Anchorage, Alaska (Bartlett/N.M. Military Institute)	32	Mendoza, Marcus	IB	5-10	185	Fr.	Houston, Texas (Spring Woods)	
40	Brandenburgh, Lance	LB	6-1	230	Sr.	Overland Park, Kan. (Aquinas)	38	Moore, Kyle	LB	6-2	225	RFr.	Elkhorn, Neb.	
1	Brooks, Chris	WR	6-2	210	So.	St. Louis, Mo. (Hazelwood E.)	Moore, Terrence	DT	6-3	275	Fr.	New Orleans, La. (McDonogh)		
	Burkes, Jaivorio	OL	6-5	315	Fr.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Moon Valley)	81	Mueller, Josh	TE	6-5	265	Sr.	Columbus, Neb. (Lakeview)	
59	Byford, Brett	OL	6-3	300	Sr.	Hartselle, Ala.	5	Murillo, Armando	CB	6-0	195	Jr.	Tampa, Fla. (Robinson/Eastern Arizona CC)	
82	Cammack, Wes	WR	5-11	185	So.	DeWitt, Neb. (Tri County)	76	Murtha, Lydon	OL	6-7	305	Jr.	Hutchinson, Minn.	
	Castille, Quentin	RB	6-1	235	Fr.	La Porte, Texas	77	Nicks, Carl	OL	6-5	330	Sr.	Salinas, Calif. (Hartnell JC/New Mexico State)	
62	Christensen, Andy	OL	6-3	300	Jr.	Bennington, Neb.	83	Nunn, Terrence	WR	6-0	190	Sr.	Houston, Texas (Cypress Falls)	
45	Covey, Nick	LB	6-2	240	So.	Glendale, Ariz. (Mount. Ridge)	33	O'Hanlon, Matt	S	5-11	200	Jr.	Bellevue, Neb. (East)	
	Crick, Jared	DE	6-6	260	Fr.	Cozad, Neb.	82	O'Leary, T.J.	LS	6-1	245	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North/New Mexico State)	
6	Culbert, Major	IB	6-0	210	So.	Harbor City, Calif. (Narbonne)	15	Octavien, Steve	LB	6-0	240	Sr.	Naples, Fla. (Lely/William R. Harper, Ill., College)	
15	Davis, Beau	QB	6-4	180	Jr.	Venice, Calif.		Paul, Niles	WR	6-1	210	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (North)	
	Davis Demetrious	DT	6-2	285	Fr.	St. Joseph, Mo. (Benton)	17	Peterson, Todd	WR	6-4	210	Jr.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)	
52	Dillard, Phillip	LB	6-1	250	So.	Tulsa, Okla. (Jenks)	85	Phillips, J.B.	TE	6-3	245	Sr.	Colleyville, Texas (Heritage)	
	Dixon, Kevin	DT	6-3	295	Jr.	Vero Beach, Fla. (Sebring/Garden City, Kan., CC)	69	Picou, Jordan	OL	6-2	305	Sr.	Rialto, Calif. (Eisenhower/Mt. San Antonio, Calif., CC)	
46	Eisenhart, Ben	S	5-11	200	Sr.	Culbertson, Neb.	98	Potter, Zach	DE	6-7	280	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)	
26	Erickson, Dan	WR	6-1	195	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Papio-LaVista)	86	Poullosky, Andy	DE	6-2	255	Sr.	Ponca, Neb.	
	Fahie, Tyrone	DL	6-3	260	RFr.	Virginia Beach, Va.	16	Purify, Maurice	WR	6-4	220	Sr.	Eureka, Calif. (San Francisco City College)	
27	Ford, Ryan	DB	5-11	175	So.	Winfield, Ala.	85	Rice, Thomas	DE	6-1	240	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (East)	
12	Ganz, Joe	QB	6-1	200	Jr.	Palos Heights, Ill. (Stagg)	63	Roark, Craig	DT	6-2	305	So.	Ada, Okla.	
	Gillaspie, Aaron	FB	6-2	235	RFr.	Littleton, Colo.	84	Rucker, Xavier	WR	5-6	160	RFr.	Minneapolis, Minn. (Breck)	
	Gilleylen, Curenski	WR	6-0	210	Fr.	Leander, Texas	51	Ruud, Bo	LB	6-3	235	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)	
39	Glassman, Dan	TE	6-4	245	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)	48	Sand, Andy	FB	6-2	230	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)	
34	Glenn, Cody	IB	6-0	230	Jr.	Rusk, Texas (Rusk)	42	Senske, Matt	FB	6-3	245	Sr.	Bellevue, Neb. (East)	
30	Green, Tierre	S	6-1	200	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Benson)	88	Sievers, Clayton	DE	6-4	245	Jr.	Elkhorn, Neb.	
2	Grixby, Cortney	CB	5-9	170	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	70	Slauson, Matt	OL	6-5	335	Jr.	Colorado Springs, Colo. (Air Force Prep)	
	Hagg, Eric	DB	6-1	195	Fr.	Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood)	97	Smith, Mike	OL	6-6	285	RFr.	Las Vegas, Nev. (Palo Verde)	
75	Haines, Victory	OL	6-7	290	Sr.	Logan, Utah (Snow, Utah, College)	43	Steinkuhler, Ty	DT	6-3	285	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)	
	7	Hardy, Frantz	WR	6-1	190	Sr.	Miami, Fla. (Washington/Butler County, Kan., CC)	91	Such, Michael	P	6-2	205	RFr.	Allen, Texas
80	Harvey, David	DE	6-4	255	So.	La Plata, Md. (McDonough)	93	Suh, Ndamukong	DT	6-4	305	So.	Portland, Ore. (Grant)	
	Helu, Roy	RB	6-0	220	Fr.	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon)	Sullivan, Shawn	DB	5-10	190	Fr.	Brenham, Texas		
90	Henery, Alex	P	6-2	170	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Burke)	84	Sullivan, Tony	DE	6-3	240	Sr.	Wahoo, Neb. (Neumann)	
9	Henry, Will	WR	6-5	210	RFr.	El Paso, Texas (J.M. Hanks)	87	Swift, Nate	WR	6-2	200	Jr.	Hutchinson, Minn.	
67	Hickman, Jacob	OL	6-4	285	So.	Bakersfield, Calif. (Centennial)	46	Tasa, Ben	TE	6-4	230	RFr.	Humphrey, Neb. (St. Francis)	
	Hill, Ryan	TE	6-3	220	Fr.	Arvada, Colo. (West)	89	Teafatiller, Hunter	TE	6-3	230	Jr.	Kingsburg, Calif. (San Joaquin)	
86	Hill, Sean	TE	6-3	250	Sr.	Lisle, Ill. (Naperville North)	3	Thenarse, Rickey	DB	6-0	190	So.	Los Angeles, Calif. (Jordan)	
4	Holt, Menelik	WR	6-4	215	So.	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)	97	Titchener, Dan	P	6-0	200	Jr.	Cheyenne, Wyo. (East)	
61	Huff, Mike	OL	6-4	300	Jr.	Ralston, Neb.	Townsend, Joseph	DT	6-3	285	So.	San Jose, Calif. (Valley Christ/Foothill, Calif., CC)		
91	Jensen, Seth	DT	6-3	295	RFr.	Fort Morgan, Colo.	99	Turner, Barry	DE	6-3	250	Jr.	Antioch, Tenn. (Brentwood Academy)	
96	Johnson, Brandon	DT	6-3	315	Sr.	Chicago, Ill. (Graceland/Compton, Calif., CC)		Washington, LaTravis	DB	6-3	210	Fr.	Bradenton, Fla. (Bayshore)	
	25	Jones, Andre	DB	6-0	190	Sr.	Fort Walton Beach, Fla. (Choctawhatchee/Fresno City, Calif., CC/Kentucky)	4	Watson, Adam	S	6-0	185	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Niwot, Colo.)
73	Jones, D.J.	OL	6-5	310	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	37	Wesch, Jake	PK	6-1	200	Jr.	North Bend, Neb.	
	Jones, Marcel	OL	6-7	300	Fr.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Trevor Browne)	22	West, Anthony	S	6-0	195	RFr.	San Diego, Calif. (Point Loma)	
5	Keller, Sam	QB	6-4	230	Sr.	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon/Arizona State)	68	Williams, Keith	OL	6-5	310	RFr.	Florissant Hill, Calif. (McClure North)	
19	Kester, Tyler	P	6-1	205	Sr.	Clearwater, Neb.	9	Wilson, Bryan	S	6-1	205	Sr.	Granada Hills, Calif. (Pierce, Calif., College)	
40	Koehler, Colton	LB	6-1	230	So.	Harvard, Neb.	27	Wilson, Kenny	IB	6-0	220	Sr.	Liberal, Kan. (Butler County, Kan., CC)	
	Kunalic, Adi	PK	6-0	175	Fr.	Fort Worth, Texas (North Crowley)	6	Witt, Patrick	QB	6-4	220	Fr.	Wylie, Texas	
	Lawrence, Blake	LB	6-2	210	Fr.	Shawnee Mission, Kan. (West)	53	Wortman, Tyler	LB	6-3	230	Jr.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)	
36	Lawson, Thomas	FB	6-0	240	Jr.	Parker, Colo. (Ponderosa)	Yancy, William	DE	6-4	230	Fr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Ironwood)		
3	Lee, Zac	QB	6-2	210	So.	San Francisco, Calif. (San Francisco City College)	23	Young, Corey	DB	6-0	195	So.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)	
							49	Young, Dreu	TE	6-4	220	RFr.	Cozad, Neb.	

'Coach's Dream'

Lucky 13? For Adam Carriker it was.

The former Cornhusker defensive end and 2006 Big 12 defensive lineman of the year was the 13th player selected in the NFL draft in late April, going to the St. Louis Rams. He was Nebraska's 32nd first-round selection, dating to the 1937 draft, in which Sam Francis, Lloyd Cardwell and Les McDonald all were first-round picks. The draft was established in 1936, with nine rounds for nine teams.

Nebraska was represented in each of the first four rounds of this year's seven-round draft, with running back Brandon Jackson going in the second round, No. 63 overall, to the Green Bay Packers, linebacker Stewart Bradley going in the third round, No. 87 overall, to the Philadelphia Eagles, and defensive end Jay Moore going in the fourth round, No. 104, to the San Francisco 49ers.

The Cornhuskers' four selections equaled last season's total.

Carriker, whom the Rams were determined to take if available at No. 13, will play tackle in their 4-3 defense. "In a crunch, he can probably play every position on our defensive line," head coach Scott Linehan was quoted on the Rams' Web site. "The best thing he does is he plays the run.

"He's one of those guys that is a coach's dream."

The Rams' rushing defense was a nightmare last season, ranking 31st in the league against the run, with opponents averaging 4.9 yards per carry. Carriker, whom Linehan described as a "very disruptive player," was drafted to help in the Rams' efforts to reduce that to a more acceptable average.

They also ranked No. 28 in scoring defense and No. 23 in total defense.

Carriker was projected as a first-round pick, while Jackson was something of a surprise pick in the second round. He was the first Cornhusker running back to be drafted since 2001, when Correll Buckhalter and Dan Alexander both were taken, in the fourth and sixth rounds, respectively. Buckhalter is still playing for the Philadelphia Eagles, while Alexander is playing for Nashville in the Arena League.

Only three other Nebraska running backs have been drafted in the last 14 years: Ahman Green (third round, 1998), Lawrence Phillips (first, 1996) and Calvin Jones (third, 1994).

Jackson will compete for a job left open when Green signed with the Houston Texans.

Bradley's stock rose leading up to the draft, and his selection in the third round was the culmination of an unlikely process that began with his walking on at Nebraska, after playing only one season of varsity football (because of

injuries) in high school in Salt Lake City.

Moore, who will play outside linebacker, had hoped to be drafted on the first day but had to wait for the second, though not long. He was the fifth player selected in the fourth round.

Soon after the draft was completed, five former Cornhuskers signed with teams as free agents: quarterback Zac Taylor and tight end Matt Herian, Tampa Bay Buccaneers; defensive lineman Ola Dagunduro, Dallas Cowboys; defensive lineman Barry Cryer, San Diego Chargers; and safety Andrew Shanle, Chicago Bears.

Taylor, who acknowledged that he could end up on Tampa Bay's practice squad, should have some familiarity with the Buccaneers' offense. Cornhusker coach Bill Callahan was offensive coordinator during Tampa Bay coach Jon Gruden's four years as coach of the Oakland Raiders (1998-2001).

The Buccaneers' roster includes three other quarterbacks: Chris Simms, Jeff Garcia and Bruce Gradkowski, who was 3-8 as the starter after Simms was sidelined by injury. Garcia signed as a free agent after starting for the Philadelphia Eagles (replacing an injured Donovan McNabb) last season.

DRAFTABLES

- Carriker was Nebraska's highest draft pick since 1998, when Grant Wistrom was the sixth player selected, also by the Rams. Wistrom announced his retirement from the NFL following the season. He planned to coach at the high school level in Springfield, Mo.

- Carriker was the sixth defensive player selected, and the fourth tackle.

- What's being picked No. 13 worth? According to the Lincoln Journal Star, the Eagles paid defensive tackle Brodrick Buckley, the 14th overall pick in the 2006

draft, nearly \$8 million in base salary and bonuses. The NFL minimum annual salary is \$285,000.

- Carriker was the second of four Big 12 players selected in the first round. Former Oklahoma running back Adrian Peterson was the first, No. 7 overall by the Minnesota Vikings. Former Texas defensive backs Michael Griffin and Aaron Ross went back-to-back, No. 19 and No. 20, to the Tennessee Titans and New York Giants, respectively.

- That three of the four former Cornhuskers drafted were defensive players is part of a trend in the past eight years. From the 2000 draft through the 2006 draft, 30 Nebraska players were selected, with 19 of them on defense — and two kickers.

- Linehan and Rams defensive coordinator Jim Haslett were among those on hand for Nebraska's pro-testing day in late February. ■

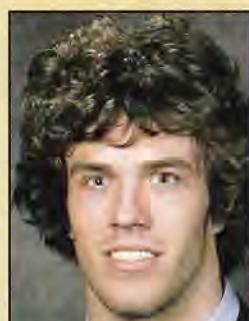
HUSKERS IN THE 2007 NFL DRAFT



Adam Carriker
St. Louis/1st Round



Brandon Jackson
Green Bay/2nd Round



Stewart Bradley
Philadelphia/3rd Round



Jay Moore
San Francisco/4th

QUICK HITS

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Here's a conversation starter among football fans: Who's the all-time Cornhusker? If the answer is based on pro as well as college career, Will Shields has to be among the possible answers.

Shields announced his retirement in mid-April after 14 seasons with the Kansas City Chiefs. The 14 NFL seasons rank among the most-ever by a former Cornhusker. Ron McDole tops the list with 18. And even more impressive is the fact that Shields started 223 consecutive games in the NFL, all but the first in his rookie season (1993), and made 12 consecutive Pro Bowl appearances.

At Nebraska, in addition to winning the Outland Trophy as a senior in 1992, he was among only a handful of Cornhusker offensive linemen who played as true freshmen.

Add to that an NFL Man of the Year Award and so much service to the community that The Kansas City Star sports columnist Joe Posnanski wrote he couldn't recount all Shields' good deeds because the newspaper "simply does not have enough room," and the case for Shields is compelling.

Clearly, he has distinguished himself both on and off the field.

"If it was up to me, I would play football forever, but, as we all know, that is unrealistic," Shields wrote on his Web site (www.willtosucceed.com) in announcing his retirement.

RULES CHANGES

In 2007, kickoffs will be from the 30-yard line instead of the 35. And "that'll make for an interesting aspect of the game," Cornhusker coach Bill Callahan said.

Callahan, who watched some of the Spring Game from the pressbox while doing analysis for the NFL Network's delayed telecast, said he saw a "new dynamic" because of the 5 yards.

"We've got to kick the ball better," he said. "There's no question about that. I think it's going to be a challenge for teams throughout the country. When you crank up a 20- or 25-mph wind here in Memorial Stadium, it's going to change the complexion of a lot of football games."

"That's something we're going to work hard on as we get into training camp."

Nebraska ranked 10th in the Big 12 in kickoff coverage last season and had the fewest touchbacks in the conference, with 12. Iowa State was the only other team with fewer than 23 touchbacks.

Jake Wesch, who took over the job from Jordan Congdon (though Congdon had more kickoffs), accounted for eight of the touchbacks and averaged a team-best 61.1 yards per kickoff. Wesch averaged 60.5 yards on six kickoffs in the Spring Game.

The Cornhuskers also need to improve on kickoff returns, after ranking 10th in the conference and 112th nationally. Brandon Jackson and Marlon Lucky handled most of the returns.

The NCAA rules committee also reverted to the previous system of stopping the game clock on changes of possession and kickoffs until the receiving team touches the ball. Last season, with the different timing rules, games were 14 minutes, on average, shorter, with an average of 14 fewer plays.

LONG-TIME NFL HUSKERS

Ron McDole

18 seasons (1961-78)
4th round

Pat Fischer

17 seasons (1961-77)
17th round

Mick Tingelhoff

17 seasons (1962-78)
free agent

Irving Fryar

17 seasons (1984-2000)
1st round

Will Shields

14 seasons (1993-2006)
3rd round

John Dutton

14 seasons (1974-87)
1st round

Roy "Link" Lyman
13 seasons (1922-34)
pre-draft

Ed Husmann

13 seasons (1953-65)
9th round

Neil Smith

13 seasons (1988-2000)
1st round

PRIME TIME

The Cornhuskers' Sept. 15 game against USC at Memorial Stadium will be televised nationally by ABC, as part of the network's Saturday Night Football package. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

Last year's game at the Los Angeles Coliseum also was televised by ABC, which has televised three other Cornhusker games in prime time during the past five seasons. Last year's game at Iowa State was among the three. The others were against Notre Dame (2002) and Penn State (2003).

The Nebraska-Colorado game on the day after Thanksgiving also will be televised nationally by ABC, with a scheduled kickoff of 11 a.m. (CDT). Beginning in 2008, the Nebraska-Colorado game could be moved to the Saturday after Thanksgiving by the Big 12 Conference.

WATCH LISTS

Brett Byford was Kurt Mann's back-up going into last season. He had played in only one game during his Cornhusker career. Now the senior from Hartselle, Ala., is among 46 centers, including three others in the Big 12, on the 2007 Rimington Trophy Spring Watch List announced in May.

With Mann ailing, Byford stepped in as the starter for the second game and never relinquished the job, earning all-conference honorable mention from both the coaches and the Associated Press.

The other Big 12 centers on the watch list are Daniel Sanders of Colorado, a junior; Adam Speiker of Missouri, a junior; and Cody Wallace of Texas A&M, a senior.

Senior Bo Ruud, who moved from weakside to strongside linebacker in the spring, was among 43 players on the preliminary Lombardi Award Watch List. The Lombardi Award is limited to down linemen and defensive players who line up within 5 yards of the line of scrimmage.

The only other Big 12 players on the preliminary list were Kansas State defensive end Ian Campbell and Missouri tight end Martin Rucker. The list will be up-dated prior to the season.

SCHEDULES SET

Nebraska's nonconference schedules for 2008 and 2009 have been finalized, with the Cornhuskers playing three first-time opponents during the two seasons. Western Michigan, Arkansas State, Florida Atlantic and Louisiana-Lafayette all will be coming to Lincoln.

In addition, they will play a previously announced home-and-home series with Virginia Tech. Nebraska has played the Hokies only once, in the 1996 Orange Bowl game.

The Cornhuskers will play eight home games in 2008, for the sixth time in school history.

Future schedules include non-conference home-and-home series with Washington (2010, 2011), UCLA (2012, 2013) and Tennessee (2016, 2017).

2008

S 6	San Jose State	S 5	Florida Atlantic
S 13	New Mexico State	S 12	Louisiana-Lafayette
S 20	Virginia Tech	S 19	at Virginia Tech
S 27	Western Michigan	S 26	Arkansas State
O 4	Missouri	O 3	at Missouri
O 11	at Texas Tech	O 17	Texas Tech
O 18	at Iowa State	O 24	Iowa State
O 25	Baylor	O 31	at Baylor
N 1	at Oklahoma	N 7	Oklahoma
N 8	Kansas	N 14	at Kansas
N 15	at Kansas State	N 21	Kansas State
N 28/29	Colorado	N 27/28	at Colorado

2009

S 6	San Jose State	S 5	Florida Atlantic
S 13	New Mexico State	S 12	Louisiana-Lafayette
S 20	Virginia Tech	S 19	at Virginia Tech
S 27	Western Michigan	S 26	Arkansas State
O 4	Missouri	O 3	at Missouri
O 11	at Texas Tech	O 17	Texas Tech
O 18	at Iowa State	O 24	Iowa State
O 25	Baylor	O 31	at Baylor
N 1	at Oklahoma	N 7	Oklahoma
N 8	Kansas	N 14	at Kansas
N 15	at Kansas State	N 21	Kansas State
N 28/29	Colorado	N 27/28	at Colorado

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Former Cornhusker fullback Dane Todd was awarded the NCAA's highest academic honor, the Walter Byers Scholarship. The scholarship is worth \$21,500 and is renewable for a second year, based on academic standing. Todd earned a perfect 4.0 grade-point average with a biological sciences major. ■

RECRUITING



Rivals.com



Rivals.com

Linemen Baker Steinkuhler (left) and Trevor Robinson have committed to NU.

RIVALS.COM'S NEBRASKA TOP 10

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
1. *Baker Steinkuhler	OL	6-6	290	4.88	Lincoln (Southwest)
2. *Trevor Robinson	OL	6-5	300	5.2	Omaha (Elkhorn)
3. Sean Fisher	LB	6-5	210	4.6	Omaha (Millard North)
4. *Collins Okafor	RB	6-1	210	4.54	Omaha (Westside)
5. Tim Biere	TE	6-4	235	4.8	Omaha (Westside)
6. John Levorson	ATH	6-3	185	4.6	Crete
7. Shaun Prater	DB	5-10	162	4.5	Omaha (Central)
8. Brian Thorson	OL	6-3	279	5.53	Omaha (Millard North)
9. Shane Prater	WR	5-10	161	4.5	Omaha (Central)
10. Nick Anderson	DB	6-1	185	4.5	Omaha (Skutt)

*Committed to Nebraska

Good Recipe

NU continues to mix junior college talent with top prep athletes

By Rick Shaw

Bill Callahan knows a good recipe for building successful recruiting classes at Nebraska. Start with four parts of blue-chip high school football talent. Add one part of established junior college playmaking ability, and mix carefully.

The recipe has worked well for Nebraska in the past. Last year's signing class, which was rated No. 13 nationally by Rivals.com, included 22 high school players and six junior college transfers. Of the 22 prep players, five earned a four-star ranking from Rivals, including offensive lineman Jaivorio Burkes, running back Quentin Castille, linebacker Blake Lawrence, receiver Nile Paul and defensive end William Yancy. Those players will likely form the foundation for possible conference championship runs in 2009 and 2010.

Five of the six junior college players signed by Nebraska in 2007 earned four-star ratings from Rivals, including safety Larry Asante,

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2007

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Blaine Gabbert	QB	6-5	229	4.65	Ballwin, Mo. (Parkway West)
Bryce Givens	OL	6-6	265	5.1	Denver, Colo. (J.K. Mullen)
Dan Hoch	OL	6-6	295	5.21	Harlan, Iowa
Collins Okafor	RB	6-1	210	4.54	Omaha, Neb. (Westside)
Trevor Robinson	OL	6-5	300	5.2	Omaha, Neb. (Elkhorn)
Baker Steinkuhler	OL	6-6	290	4.88	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
David Whitmore	DB	6-2	190	4.5	Port Arthur, Texas (Memorial)

For more daily recruiting information, visit HuskersIllustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.

defensive tackle Kevin Dixon, quarterback Zac Lee, cornerback Armando Murillo and defensive end Joseph Townsend. Those players will be looked to immediately to be key contributors over the next two seasons.

Expect Nebraska to take another five to six junior college players in its 2008 recruiting class. Judging by early recruiting returns, the Huskers are, once again, positioned to pick up some of the top junior college talent in the country.

One of the top returning running backs in the California junior college ranks for the upcoming season is Tavares Pressley. The 6-foot-1, 215-pound athlete out of El Camino Community College in Torrance accounted for 1,736 all-purpose yards and 25 touchdowns as a freshman last year. Not surprisingly, several Division I powers have taken notice.

Pressley already holds scholar-

ship offers from both the Huskers and Colorado. He's also getting heavy interest from Arizona, Oregon State and Washington State. Despite a variety of overtures, the athletic back (4.4-second 40-yard dash) holds one school at the top of his list.

"I have interest in all those schools, but if it was a pick between the ones right now, it would be Nebraska," Pressley said. "I like the program because it is in the Big 12, and I just like how they use their backs. I mean, Nebraska is a good program, and I've been checking out their depth chart on their Web site."

Pressley is planning to take an official visit to Lincoln sometime in mid-October, for either Nebraska's game against Oklahoma State (Oct. 13) or the contest against Texas A&M (Oct. 20).

Myron Dillard is another skill position player out of California for whom the Huskers are making an early push. The 6-0, 190-pound wide

receiver from Los Medanos College in Pittsburgh, holds early offers from Iowa State, Kansas State, Maryland, Oregon State, Southern Miss and Nebraska.

As a freshman, Dillard hauled in 15 passes for 237 yards and one touchdown. He also utilized his tremendous speed and quickness (4.3 40) to average almost 24 yards on 16 kick returns.

Originally from St. Petersburg, Fla., Dillard is hoping that South Florida comes through with a scholarship offer. If it does, look for the talented receiver to snatch up the opportunity to return home. If not, Dillard said he'd be inclined to give the Midwest a try.

"Getting back home is what I want to do, but if I don't, I want to go to Nebraska," Dillard said. "In fact, I'm going to Nebraska if I don't go home."

Dillard said he talks to NU assistant Dennis Wagner a lot and was expecting Wagner to visit his school. "I have a good relationship with he and the staff there (Nebraska)," Dillard said.

One of the most highly recruited junior college athletes in California is defensive end Simi Kuli. The 6-4, 265-pound teammate of Pressley at El Camino has picked up nine early scholarship offers. Arizona, Kansas State, Ole Miss, Nebraska, Oklahoma State, Oregon, Oregon State, Purdue and Texas A&M have all offered the defensive playmaker. Like his teammate, however, Kuli seems to be leaning toward continuing his college playing career in Lincoln.

"I'm pretty much looking for a top program and good coaches who will help me out and make me better," Kuli said. "I was surprised to get Nebraska's offer. I just didn't think they'd be interested in me. I just know that they are a good football team with coaches who could help get me to where I want to go (NFL)."

Combining good size and quickness (4.7), Kuli tallied 56 total tackles last season, including 15 for loss and 4.5 sacks.

Nebraska is on the short list of another heavily recruited junior college defensive end. Jarrett Crittenton stars for the North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, ND. The 6-6, 270-pound end, with 4.62

RECRUITING NOTES

Quarterback Joins O-Line Recruits

By Sean Stevens

Early results from Nebraska's 2008 recruiting class showed a strong emphasis on the offensive line, with oral commitments from three linemen rated by Rivals.com among the top 100 players nationally at all positions. In mid-May, the Huskers gave them a quarterback to protect as 6-foot-5, 240-pound Blaine Gabbert of Ballwin, Mo., delivered his commitment to offensive coordinator Shawn Watson and head coach Bill Callahan.

"I have a very good relationship with Coach Watson, and I believe he will help me achieve my goals as well as the team's goals," Gabbert said. "I want to reach the top level at the University of Nebraska, personally, as well as our team. I strongly believe that we can go all the way. I feel Nebraska is building that right now, and with this recruiting class, we can and will do that."

Gabbert is Rivals' No. 1-ranked player in Missouri, making him the third state top-ranked player in the class. Offensive linemen Baker Steinkuhler (Nebraska) and Dan Hoch (Iowa) are the others.

As a junior, Gabbert threw for 1,523 yards and 20 touchdowns while also rushing for 458 yards and eight touchdowns. Gabbert possesses surprising speed for a player of his size.

"I'm a prototypical drop-back passer by my looks, but I have an extremely strong arm, and I'm extremely accurate," he said. "I'm also extremely fast. If you look at me, you'd not say I'm very fast, but I can usually run in the 4.5 range in the 40. That's something a little extra that helps."

Gabbert chose NU over offers from around the nation. He had narrowed his list to the Huskers, Alabama, and home-state Missouri, and talked about what made him choose Nebraska.

"I felt Nebraska was the right school for me. I just had the feeling when I went up there. Their tradition is amazing," he said. "You go inside their new football offices and facilities, and it's just like 'wow.' Their facilities — if not the top in the country — it's right up there. Their indoor is amazing, and their weight room is the best I've ever seen — and I've seen some awesome weight rooms. Their coaching staff are really nice guys."

With Gabbert, Hoch and Steinkuhler joining Elkhorn offensive lineman Trevor Robinson, Denver offensive lineman Bryce Givens and Omaha running back Collins Okafor in the fold, NU will now look to finish the offensive side of the ball with a couple of wide receivers and tight ends.

Among the top wide receiver targets on their board are likely to be Wes Kemp (6-4, 226) of St. Louis, Jake Muasau (6-1, 209) of Sierra Vista, Ariz., and Roy Roundtree (6-1, 160) of Trotwood, Ohio.

At tight end, possible options include Spencer Ladner (6-7, 230) of Kansas City, Mo., Mike Cruz (6-4, 255) of Johnstown, Pa., James Hanna (6-5, 216) of Flower Mound, Texas, Anthony Miller (6-4, 245) of San Jose, Calif., and in-state Tim Biere (6-4, 235) of Omaha (Westside).

Expect the Huskers to take at least two to three wide receivers and two tight ends in this class. ■



Blaine Gabbert

RIVALS.COM'S NATIONAL TOP 100

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown/school	51	Nigel Carr	OLB	6-3	220	Jacksonville FL/First Coast
1	Terrelle Pryor	QB	6-6	220	Jeanette PA/Jeanette	52	Michael Floyd	WR	6-3	195	Saint Paul MN/C.D. Hall
2	Darrell Scott	RB	6-0	215	Ventura CA/St. Bonnevent.	53	Brandon Moore	TE	6-6	243	Trotwood OH/Madison
3	Julio Jones	WR	6-4	215	Foley AL/Foley	54	Darryl Stonum	WR	6-2	180	Sugar Land TX/Ft Bnd Dilles
4	A.J. Green	WR	6-4	184	Summervi SC /Summerville	55	Ryan Williams	RB	5-10	192	Manassas VA/S. Jackson
5	Nigel Bradham	OLB	6-2	230	Crawford FL/Wakulla	56	Mark Barron	ATH	6-2	205	Mobile AL/St. Pauls
6	DeAngelo Tyson	DT	6-2	276	Statesboro GA/Statesboro	57	Robert Quinn	SDE	6-5	245	N. Charleston SC/Ft. Dorch.
7	Will Hill	ATH	6-3	203	Jersey City NJ/Saint Peter's	58	William Green	WDE	6-4	200	Hoover AL/Spain Park
8	Michael Brewster	OT	6-6	305	Orlando FL/Edgewater	59	Andrew Luck	QB	6-4	215	Houston TX/Stradford
9	DaQuan Bowers	SDE	6-4	267	Bamberg SC/Bamberg-Erh.	60	Jeff Fuller	WR	6-4	202	McKinney TX/Boyd
10	Jermie Calhoun	RB	6-0	210	Van TX/Van	61	Dontavious Jackson	RB	5-11	195	Franklin GA/Heard County
11	Tyron Smith	OT	6-6	264	Moreno Vall. CA/Rancho V.	62	Dann O'Neill	OT	6-8	291	Grand Haven MI/Grand Hvn
12	Shayne Hale	ILB	6-4	225	Monroeville PA/Gateway	63	Dayne Crist	QB	6-5	228	Sherman Oaks CA/N. Dame
13	R.J. Washington	WDE	6-3	245	Keller TX/Fossil Ridge	64	Tavarres King	WR	6-1	169	Mt. Airy GA/Habersham Cnt.
14	T.J. Bryant	CB	6-1	175	Tallahassee FL/Lincoln	65	Brandon Smith	ATH	6-3	210	New Brunswick NJ/N. Brun.
15	Arthur Brown	ILB	6-1	210	Wichita KS/East	66	Brice Butler	WR	6-2	178	Norcross GA/Norcross
16	Matt Kalil	OT	6-7	281	Anaheim CA/Servite	67	Marcus Robinson	OLB	6-2	210	Homestead FL/Homestead
17	D.J. Shoemate	ATH	6-0	219	Anaheim CA/Servite	68	Chris Tolliver	WR	6-1	180	Rayville LA/Rayville
18	E.J. Manuel	QB	6-6	203	Virginia Beach VA/Bayside	69	Antoine McClain	OT	6-6	317	Anniston AL/Anniston
19	Baker Steinkuhler	OT	6-6	290	Lincoln NE/Southwest	70	C. Washington	WDE	6-4	220	Waynesboro GA/Burke Co.
20	Deion Walker	WR	6-4	186	Christchurch, VA/Chrstchrch	71	Kenny Tate	WR	6-4	215	Hyattsville MD/Dematha
21	Chancey Aghayere	SDE	6-4	244	Garland TX/Garland	72	Vinston Painter	OT	6-6	317	Norfolk VA/Maury
22	Kyle Rudolph	TE	6-7	220	Cincinnati, OH/Elder	73	DeSean Hales	WR	5-10	165	Klein TX/Oak
23	Patrick Johnson	CB	6-1	193	Pompano Beach FL/Ely	74	Lynn Katoa	ILB	6-2	220	Salt Lake City UT/Cottonwd
24	Stephen Good	OT	6-5	290	Paris TX/Paris	75	Aaron Williams	CB	6-1	175	Round Rock TX/McNeil
25	Brandon Barnes	ATH	6-0	185	Bunn NC/Bunn	76	Etienne Sabino	ILB	6-3	228	Miami FL/Krop
26	Lucas Nix	OT	6-6	295	Jefferson Hills PA/Jefferson	77	Greg Shaw	OT	6-5	267	Miami FL/Pace
27	Tyler Love	OT	6-7	285	Mountain Brook AL/MtBrook	78	Terrell Manning	OLB	6-2	205	Laurinburg NC/Scotland
28	Jonathan Baldwin	TE	6-6	225	Aliquippa PA/Aliquippa	79	Dee Finley	S	6-3	210	Auburn AL/Auburn
29	Marcus Forston	DT	6-2	286	Miami FL/Northwestern	80	Jarvis Humphrey	DT	6-2	290	Cedar Hill TX/Cedar Hill
30	Richard Samuel	RB	6-0	197	Cartersville GA/Cass	81	Dan Buckner	WR	6-4	209	Allen TX/Allen
31	Devoe Torrance	ATH	6-2	210	Massillon OH/Washington	82	Max Tuioiti-Mariner	OG	6-4	300	Corona CA Corona
32	Burton Scott	ATH	5-11	194	Pritchard AL/Vigor	83	Jon Major	ILB	6-4	230	Parker CO/Ponderosa
33	Matt Patchen	OT	6-7	265	Seffner FL/Armwood	84	Gerrell Robinson	ATH	6-4	210	Chandler AZ/Hamilton
34	Steven Filer	ILB	6-3	220	Chicago IL/Mount Carmel	85	J.B. Shugarts	OT	6-7	299	Klein TX/Klein
35	Lamaar Thomas	ATH	5-10	166	Ft. Washington MD/Friendly	86	Trevor Robinson	OG	6-5	300	Omaha NE/Elkhorn
36	D.J. Monroe	CB	5-9	165	Angleton TX/Angleton	87	Kavario Middleton	TE	6-6	250	Lakewood WA/Lakes
37	Jameel Owens	WR	6-3	210	Muskogee OK/Muskogee	88	Robert Golden	CB	5-10	182	Fresno CA/Edison
38	Brendan Beal	ILB	6-4	235	Roxbury NJ/Roxbury	89	Averin Collier	ATH	5-11	195	Churchville NY/Chrchvll-Chl
39	DeVier Posey	WR	6-3	190	Cincinnati OH/LaSalle	90	E.J. Woods	S	6-0	192	Encino CA/Crespi
40	Blake Ayles	TE	6-4	235	Orange CA/Lutheran	91	Jake Stoneburner	TE	6-6	223	Dublin OH/Coffman
41	Aldarius Johnson	WR	6-2	200	Miami FL/Northwestern	92	Kemonte Bateman	WR	6-0	176	Los Angeles CA/Crenshaw
42	Rahim Moore	S	6-0	185	Los Angeles CA/Dorsey	93	Lane Clelland	OT	6-5	265	Owings Mills MD/McDngh
43	A.J. Harmon	OG	6-4	308	Louisville GA/ Jefferson Co.	94	Cordale Scott	WR	6-3	200	Cleveland OH/Glenville
44	DeAndre Brown	WR	6-6	208	Ocean Springs MS/Ocn Spgs	95	Charles Mitchell	CB	5-11	187	Clarksdale MS/Clarksdale
45	Blaine Gabbert	QB	6-5	229	Ballwin MO/Parkway West	96	Jordan Futch	OLB	6-4	200	Hollywood FL/Chmnd-Mdnn
46	Soloman Koehler	DT	6-2	315	Kaneohe HI/Castle	97	Allen Carroll	OG	6-4	300	Oakland CA/McClymonds
47	Jonas Gray	RB	5-9	206	Detroit MI/Country Day	98	Mike Adams	OT	6-7	308	Dublin OH/Coffman
48	Ethan Johnson	SDE	6-4	266	Portland OR/Lincoln	99	Matt Branch	TE	6-7	240	Monroe LA/Sterlington
49	Boubacar Cissoko	CB	5-9	170	Detroit MI/Cass Tech	100	R.J. Blanton	S	6-1	177	Matthews NC/Butler
50	Brandon Beachum	RB	6-1	220	Youngstown OH/Mooney	For more daily recruiting information, visit huskersillustrated.com					

ber of other junior college standouts. On the offensive side, the list includes running back Anthony Dickson (5-11, 205) of Valley Community College in Los Angeles, wide receivers Adrian Hilburn (6-2, 190) and Carlton Sanders (6-2, 190) of City College of San Francisco and receiver Carl Moore (6-4, 220) of Sierra Community College in Roseville, Calif.

On defense, the Huskers have offered defensive end Tevita Finau (6-5, 275) and linebacker Aki Vakalahi (6-3, 245) of Phoenix College in Phoenix, Ariz.

The Nebraska coaching staff will almost certainly try to duplicate its methods from previous years, by combining top high school talent with seasoned junior college athletes who can step in and contribute immediately. Judging by results from years past, it seems to be a good recipe for success. ■

speed, holds early scholarship offers from Arkansas, Auburn, Clemson, Kansas State, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Purdue and Texas A&M.

North Dakota State College of Science coach Chuck Parsons said whichever school signs Crittenton to a letter of intent next winter will be getting the services of a very special athlete.

"He did excellent in spring ball, and he's only going to get better," Parsons said. "He's been getting down the speed and technique of the college game. He's a big, thick guy with long arms. He's a very effective pass rusher. With his quickness off the edge, it's hard for anyone to stop him. He covers a lot of ground in one step. He's very coachable and a very nice young man. I wish I could have a whole team like him."

In addition, Nebraska also has early offers out to a num-

2007 NEBRASKA SIGNEES

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (High School/Junior College)
Prince Amukamara	ATH	6-1	180	Glendale, Ariz. (Apollo HS)
*Larry Asante	DB	6-1	205	Alexandria, Va. (Hayfield HS/Coffeyville, Kan., CC)
*Shukree Barfield	DT	6-4	310	Camden, N.J. (Camden HS/Garden City, Kan., CC)
Anthony Blue	DB	5-10	175	Cedar Hill, Texas (Cedar Hill HS)
Jaivorio Burkes	OL	6-5	315	Phoenix, Ariz. (Moon Valley HS)
Quentin Castille	RB	6-1	235	La Porte, Texas (La Porte HS)
Jared Crick	DE	6-6	260	Cozad, Neb. (Cozad HS)
Demetrious Davis	DT	6-2	285	St. Joseph, Mo. (Benton HS)
Kevin Dixon	DT	6-3	295	Vero Beach, Fla. (Sebring HS/Garden City, Kan., CC)
Curenski Gilleylen	WR	6-0	210	Leander, Texas (Leander HS)
Eric Hagg	ATH	6-1	195	Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood HS)
Roy Helu	RB	6-0	220	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon Valley HS)
Ryan Hill	TE	6-3	230	Arvada, Colo. (Arvada West HS)
Marcel Jones	OL	6-7	300	Phoenix, Ariz. (Trevor Browne HS)
Adi Kunalic	K	6-0	175	Fort Worth, Texas (North Crowley HS)
Blake Lawrence	LB	6-2	200	Overland Park, Kan. (Shawnee Mission West HS)
*Zac Lee	QB	6-2	205	San Francisco, Calif. (St. Ignatius Prep/San Francisco CC)
*Marcus Mendoza	RB	5-10	175	Houston, Texas (Spring Woods HS)
Terrence Moore	DT	6-3	275	New Orleans, La. (McDonogh 35 Senior HS)
*Armando Murillo	DB	6-0	195	Tampa, Fla. (Robinson HS/Eastern Arizona CC)
Niles Paul	WR	6-1	210	Omaha, Neb. (Omaha North HS)
**Aaron Schulte	OL	6-6	320	Norfolk, Neb. (Norfolk Catholic HS)
Austin Stafford	LB	6-2	205	Hayward, Calif. (Hayward HS)
Shawn Sullivan	DB	5-10	190	Brenham, Texas (Brenham HS)
Joseph Townsend	DT	6-3	285	San Jose, Calif. (Valley Christian HS/Foothill CC)
Latravis Washington	DB	6-3	210	Bradenton, Fla. (Bayshore HS)
*Patrick Witt	QB	6-4	215	Wylie, Texas (Wylie HS)
William Yancy	DE	6-4	230	Glendale, Ariz. (Ironwood HS)

*Enrolled at Nebraska in January

**Did not meet academic requirement

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Q&A

His tenure as Nebraska athletic director, now in its fifth year, has been one of controversy. Steve Pederson has endured his share of criticism. He admits he could have handled some things better. But decisions had to be made, and he never wavered in making them.

"Maybe as much as anything, I've tried to see things as they are and not as people hoped they would be," he said. "I think there's a tendency to hope that you wake up in the morning and everything's really fine, that we never went 7-7 and that we weren't struggling. It just doesn't happen that way, and I think a lot of people understand that. A lot of people appreciate that. But I still think there's a percentage of people who hope that it wasn't quite what it was, that it was just kind of going to work itself out."

"If there's one thing I've found over the course of time, things don't just work themselves out. As hard as it is, you have to just look at it directly and say, 'You know what, we have to address this whether anybody likes it or not.' That's when you take off the personal hat, put on the athletic director's hat and say, 'What is my job and what is the responsibility of my job?'"

Too often, those who have been quick to criticize him have done so on a personal level. But through it all, his sense of responsibility has remained unchanged, "to make sure that I'm doing what's in the best interest of the University of Nebraska," the North Platte, Neb., native said.

In early June, Pederson sat down with Huskers Illustrated to share a few opinions.

HI: In returning after stops at Ohio State, Tennessee and

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR **STEVE PEDERSON**

"I think one thing is so important, that we keep remembering what we want to have here is a great program, not a great team. You build a great program by doing things the right way, laying a good foundation and ensuring that you're going to have a good team all the time."

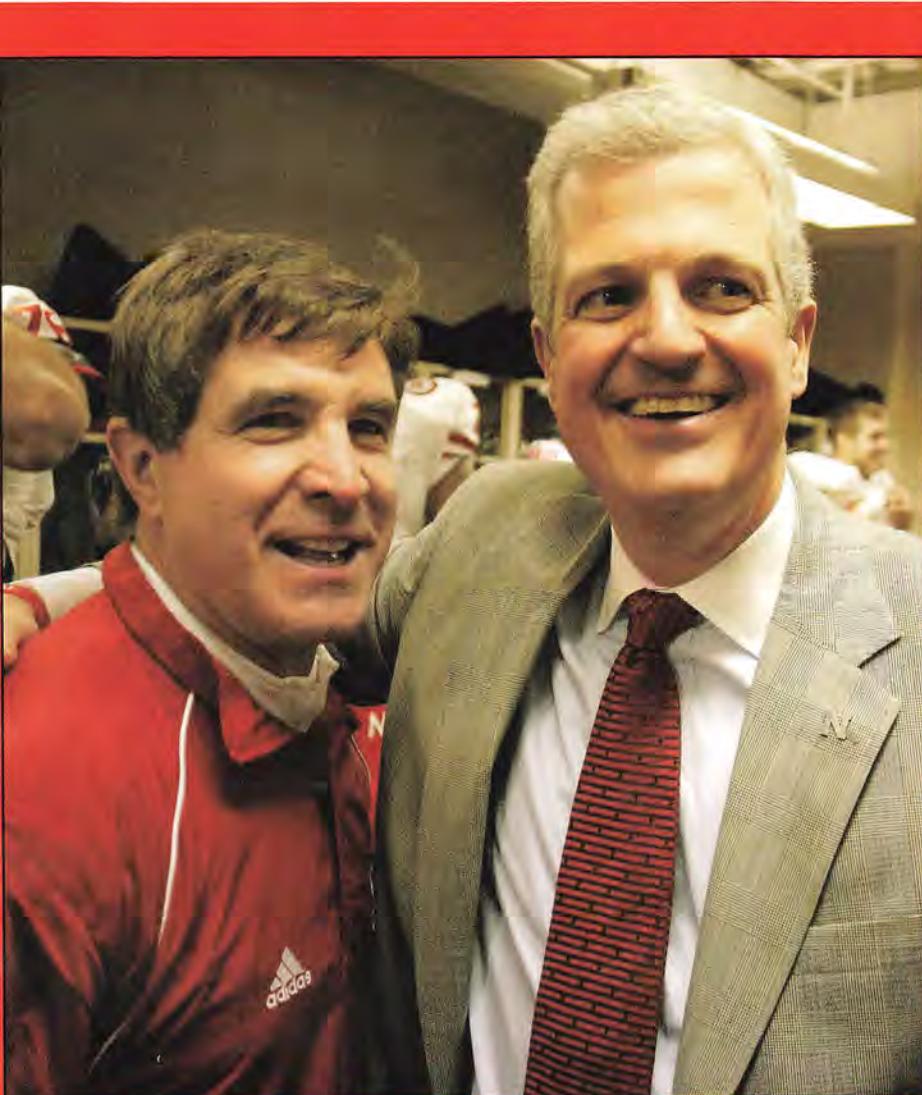
Pittsburgh, as athletic director, have you learned anything about Cornhusker football fans that you didn't know or understand before leaving?

Pederson: Maybe that like all places, our fan-base is changing a little bit. The people who were as supportive as any group during some of the toughest times were our longtime fans. What most of them would say to me was, "We've seen times when the program had to change and we understand the need for changing the program." If you were born since 1962, you've never experienced anything but excellent teams. You were frustrated if we only won nine games. So sometimes your frame of reference is, "Well, we always win." And I hope we always win, too. But there was going to be a transition era at some point, and I think that era of transition was essential to try to manage as best we could.

If we get through this with only missing one bowl game (in 2004) and having that particular season (5-6), then I think it's been a pretty successful transition. We want to keep driving this up, but I don't think it's realistic to think there are going to be days where somebody's going to win the conference 10 years in a row. I don't think those days probably exist.

HI: Acknowledging that fans tend to be more impatient and demand immediate results nowadays, has Bill Callahan met or exceeded your expectations during his three seasons as coach?

Pederson: Winning the North (Division) was a huge step in the third year. I actually think doing what we did in the second year and beating Michigan was a gigantic step. And then I thought another great step was to win the North Division because you start to



Athletic director Steve Pederson hired Bill Callahan in January of 2004.

look at it, Bill has had to put in place a program where he had to do it by trying to fill some of the upper classes with junior college and four-year transfers to kind of balance out those classes. We really haven't had a chance to see a lot of the freshmen play as much — those he recruited as freshmen — because we're just kind of getting them into the system. So I would say we're a little bit ahead of schedule, in my opinion.

I think one thing is so important, that we keep remembering what we want to have here is a great program, not a great team. You build a great program by doing things the right way, laying a good foundation and ensuring that you're going to have a good team all the time. You can jump up and have a great year, have a great team, and then slide way back. Oftentimes, you've taken shortcuts to get to that point. And we haven't taken any shortcuts. We're doing it the right way. He

has hired a great staff. We're continuing to recruit better and better. Getting this building done (Tom and Nancy Osborne Complex), I think, has been key to recruit better and better. I think we have great recruiters and talented guys. But they've got to have the facilities to recruit to. I feel great about where we are right now.

HI: It would seem that Bill Callahan hasn't missed a beat in recruiting even though he left the college game for the NFL in 1995. Obviously, his ability to recruit was essential in his hiring, given your sense that Nebraska's talent level had begun to decline. Has he handled recruiting as you anticipated?

Pederson: Had Bill been an average recruiter in college, maybe that transition would have been tough. But one of the things I knew about Bill from recruiting against him was that Bill was

one of the best recruiters in college football, himself. And I just don't think you lose that knack. I think if you're a great recruiter, you're a great recruiter. He knew that the recruiting rules had changed in terms of contacts and all of that, but he knew the basics of what you have to do to make sure the best kids are coming to your school. He was a big part of helping Wisconsin get going, get turned around, in the time he was with (then-Badgers coach) Barry Alvarez. So I'd say absolutely he hasn't missed a beat.

I could tell the first time I sat down and talked to him that he had kept very engaged. I also think that having had a son who was playing college football at UCLA, engaged in the process, probably kept him as current as anything. I think that had to be an advantage for him, that Brian (his son) was going through all this stuff and Brian knew all of what everybody else knew. You keep pretty in tune.

One of the things Bill understands, which I think all great coaches understand, is that you're not signing recruits for the press conference. I had some recruiting classes that I thought were tremendous recruiting classes that we got little accolade for. I had other recruiting classes that were rated very highly, and I was a little disappointed in how we turned out. Sometimes the recruiting ratings tend to be based more on a few guys than top to bottom. I think the secret at Nebraska is, if you take 23 guys, you'd like 23 of them to be good players, not five superstars and then the rest of them are average. You really need all of them to be good players. And I think that's why last year's recruiting class, as I look from top to bottom, was as good of a recruiting class as I've seen for a long time because we got the guys we needed at the right positions, and they're all really fine players. Even the ones that came in at mid-semester are already factors.

HI: During the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference, someone suggested that college football might be as good as it's ever been, that this might be a "Golden Age." If so, what are the implications of that?

Pederson: I think college football is the best it's ever been. The quality of the play, the intricacy of the play is tremendous. There's a lot more discussion now about coaches in college football than there used to be. You always had the legendary coaches, but you

didn't used to turn on a preview for a game, and it was Coach A versus Coach B in this big showdown. It was usually the players.

There's a lot more talk about strategy between coaches, can this offensive coordinator out-smart this defensive coordinator? I think that's maybe because the game has become so much more sophisticated. You can still have really good players and win a lot of games. But I think you've got to do a great job of coaching. And so you've got to recruit first, and then you've got to get as much as you can out of them. Some of it has been born off the 85-scholarship limit, the fact that you can't just throw people at the problem anymore. You've got to have really good players; you're not going to have the depth at certain positions you used to. We can remember the days where we used to have 14 tight ends. You can't have 14 tight ends anymore. If somebody got hurt, you just threw somebody else in there. With that many people, the law of averages said somebody out of that group was going to surprise you; they were going to be better than you thought they were.

I think it's an exciting time. I also think it's a transition time, and what people are going to have to get used to is the fact that probably the Charlie McBrides and Milt Tenopirs are not going to be as commonplace, where they stay at a place for 20 or 30 years. I think coaches are going to be more apt to move and transition, go places and get a chance to be coordinators. As our program has more success, there are going to be people who want to hire our guys as head coaches and coordinators. I understand that. We want what's best for them. We hope they're happy here and will want to stay as long as possible. But I don't think anywhere in college athletics you're going to see longevity for coaching staffs you once did.

HI: *Given your previous experience at Nebraska, when it was in the Big Eight Conference, how much more difficult has being successful in the Big 12 become?*

Pederson: The truth is, for years and years only Nebraska and Oklahoma were supporting their programs to the highest level of college football. Colorado would have some good years with some good athletes. Missouri might have a good year with some good athletes. But for the most part, a lot of Big Eight schools just

weren't putting much into it. So they were kind of getting out of it what they were putting into it. I can't speak for the Southwest Conference, but my guess is that some of those schools were the same way. But what's happened is that Nebraska and Texas and Oklahoma have driven everybody to either get in the game or get out. They've chosen to get in, and I think all anybody would have to do is go to Stillwater, Okla., or Lubbock, Texas, and take a look at what they're doing facilities-wise, what they're doing to build their programs. That means it's almost become like the National Football League, where everybody's good, and at the beginning of the year, anybody could win. People have just invested more in their programs. I think Kansas State found that out. When Kansas State got a good coach and invested in their program, all of a sudden they were a factor in this league in a short period of time.

It reminds me of my time in the SEC where I used to say we never had a team we ever played (in the conference) that wasn't really good. I remember when I got to the Big Ten, early on Coach (John) Cooper asked me what I thought the difference was. I said what I saw between the Big Eight and the Big Ten, at that juncture, about 1988, was that I didn't think we had any teams as good as Nebraska and Oklahoma, but I said I thought everybody else in the league was way better than the rest of the (Big Eight) programs. So that makes it week in and week out a lot tougher. That's where we are right now. There are no gimmes.

Take baseball, for example, where the season hasn't gone exactly like we had hoped. Yet we end up with an RPI that's about 25 in the country. We end up fourth in our conference, going to the NCAA tournament, and six of our 10 baseball teams got in the tournament. That tells you how good this conference is, which is why I say to our coaches in every sport, "Let's focus on winning the Big 12 because if you can win the conference, I feel you'll have a chance to win the national championship." Any successful Big 12 team will have a chance to win a national championship in whatever sport. It's just that good in everything across the board.

HI: *Are you concerned as athletic director that the competition to be successful is turning into an arms race of building new facilities and spending large amounts of money*



Steve Pederson (right) watches a track and field meet with longtime head coach Gary Pepin.

on coaching salaries?

Pederson: We're going to try not to let that happen. We built a \$50 million facility that we think is pretty spectacular. We didn't have to build a \$100 million facility because somebody else did. We built what we thought we needed to have a very excellent facility that's in the best interests of our student-athletes. The same way with coaches' salaries. There may be a point at which we say, "That's more than we can justify paying a coach." We haven't reached that point, but I suppose we could.

I think at some point this will slow up a little bit. For one thing, once everybody gets facilities built, there's not much else they can do. It's kind of typical of our world, though. Universities are all trying to build a better medical school than the next one, and companies are trying to build better mousetraps than the next company. So I don't think we're any different than people building banks or building law firms, whatever the case may be. We're pretty much falling in line with where society is.

That's why internally you have to stay so strong in your commitment to do what's best for the student-athlete



Pederson: What I talked to the assistant coaches about as much as anything is how they will be judged. I think it's important that people not begin to be unrealistic about how they'll be judged. I told them they'll be judged on what they know because they're going to have to be successful. Being successful is going to be the result of your expertise in various areas. You need expertise in offense or defense, recruiting and being able to hire a good staff; you've got to know something so well that you can really be an expert in.

You have to bring something to the institution. You have to be able to fit at that institution. I don't believe, personally, that every coach can be successful at every school, no matter how good of a coach they are. I think it has to be the right fit for you. So making that determination is important.

Then they're going to be judged on how they do. All the public relations and media relations and fund-raising and glad-handing and likability are still not going to out-weigh the fact that you have to be successful. I gave them an example of coaches arriving at a school and right away everybody wants them to become a public-relations machine, go out and meet all the alums, travel around and sell tickets, do all this stuff, when what they really need to do is get with their team, know the players, get into recruiting.

It's almost like there needs to be a four-month moratorium after somebody gets a job where they don't have any responsibilities except their team. I tried to do that with Bill. I tried to just take Bill and say, "I need you to recruit. I need you to get ready for spring ball and get to know the kids. Don't worry about all this other stuff." Early on, some people said, "I wish Coach Callahan was out more." Well, I think the first four months are crucial to gaining credibility with your team. You've got to spend as much time as you can with your team. I tried to do the same thing with Doc (Sadler). Doc made some appearances early on, but if you can remember, he did an event the first night, did an event the second night after he got hired, and then he was on a plane to Australia to get Aleks Maric to come back. That was the biggest priority, not this other stuff. You've still got to remember whether everybody loves you and thinks you're the greatest person in the world, if you don't win, that's not going to last very long.

I think Tom (Osborne) knew that as

well as anybody. Tom could always prioritize what was going to cost the team. "We're going to do certain things but at a point at which it begins to cost the team, you can't afford to do that." I've always remembered that. That's my job as athletic director, to be the one who stands in there and says, "Coach would love to do this event but that's not in the best interests of our football program," or basketball program, whatever the case may be. We need to let them do their job.

HI: What is your vision for the immediate future? What would you like to see added now?

Pederson: I want to expand our academic center. We have the best academic program in the country. We have fabulous results. Our student-athletes take school very seriously. They've done well in school. My concern is that the building that was built for academics was done in 1983 with combined proceeds from the Kickoff Classic where we played Penn State and gifts from the Hewitt and Boekel families. That was 1983. And while we've done some adjustments to that, I don't believe the facility any longer matches the program. So we've got to expand the facilities and get a facility more in keeping with how you study. We studied differently then. We didn't have computers then. Now computers are an essential component of this, and the way kids study is a little different than it has been.

That's the No. 1 priority because it affects every one of our student-athletes in every sport and will make a difference not only in our recruiting but our continued academic performance. I think one of the things we've taken great pride in is we've been able to have this balance.

When you can win the national championship in volleyball and win the North Division and play in the conference championship in football and have Dane Todd win the Walter Byers Award and have Sarah Pavan be the Academic All-American of the Year in volleyball, you know you've got a pretty good balance of athletics and academics. And that's important to us.

We've got this great thing going. We can't let it slip at all. The graduation rate is at an all-time high. We're at 95-percent graduation rate. I don't want to stop and Dennis (LeBlanc) doesn't want to stop until we get to 100 percent. But I think we need the facility to get us to 100 percent. ■

so that they don't wake up one day and say, "You know what, we're just professionals, athletes who just happen to be going to college at the same time." We don't want that to happen.

HI: Has the addition of a 12th game to the regular-season football schedule been positive?

Pederson: I think so. But we've got to account for the kids who are playing the games, too, and I do think the 12th game has been an added physical burden on the kids. Injuries generally happen when people are tired. There are obviously a lot of ways injuries can happen, but one of the ways that happens is when people get tired. I think the 12th game has been good because that (off) weekend we were generally scrimmaging anyway. It gives kids more of a chance to play, and certainly the revenue has been important to keeping our other programs strong. That's ultimately what probably drove it as much as anything, the increased revenue for most schools to support their other programs.

HI: You were the keynote speaker at the NCAA Expert Coaches Academy in Miami recently. What was your message to those minority assistant coaches?

THE BIG 12

Red October?

Oct. 6 games symbolically significant in handicapping Big 12's divisional races

By Mike Babcock

First, some recent history, unpleasant for Nebraska fans but useful, perhaps, when handicapping this season's race in the Big 12's North Division . . .

The last time the Cornhuskers played at Columbia, Mo., in 2005, they were unable to establish a running game, finishing with a rushing net of minus-2 yards, and losing 41-24.

The time before that, in 2003, they were unable to hold a 24-14 lead, allowing 27 points while scoring none in the fourth quarter, and losing by the same 41-24 score.

The curiosity of the scores aside, prior to 2003, Nebraska hadn't lost at Columbia since 1973, Tom Osborne's first trip there as head coach — as well as his first loss as head coach.

The Cornhuskers will return to Columbia this season for an Oct. 6 game against Missouri, a game that almost certainly will establish a North Division favorite.

Another team could step up in the division, of course. After all, conference play will be just beginning. The Nebraska game is Missouri's conference opener, in fact.

The Cornhuskers open Big 12 play against Iowa State the week before. So the Tigers will have an off-week to prepare for Nebraska's visit, another factor to consider.

In any case, Missouri would appear to be the most serious threat to Nebraska's hopes of making a return trip to

the Big 12 championship game on Dec. 1 in San Antonio.

The first Saturday in October also will be useful when handicapping this season's race in the Big 12's South Division, with the Texas-Oklahoma game at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

In fact, all of that day's games are symbolically significant.

Oklahoma State plays at Texas A&M, in a potentially high-scoring match-up of teams capable of seriously challenging Texas and Oklahoma in the division.

Kansas plays at Kansas State, an intense rivalry and, more importantly, a match-up of teams most likely capable of challenging Nebraska and Missouri in the division.

Kansas has a week off to prepare for the trip to Manhattan, by the way.

Iowa State plays at Texas Tech, in an intra-divisional game involving teams that are difficult to handicap, the Cyclones because they have a new head coach, the Red Raiders because their unconventional head coach almost always makes them more competitive than anyone expected.

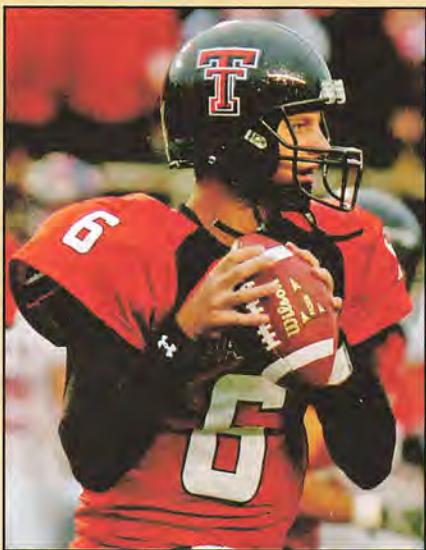
And finally, Colorado plays at Baylor, in a match-up of teams that might well find themselves attempting to avoid last place in their respective divisions by late November.

The Big 12's showcase games on Oct. 6, however, are Texas-Oklahoma and Nebraska-Missouri. The winners very well could be playing at the Alamodome for a guaranteed BCS bid.

There's historical precedent for picking the winner of



When Nebraska last visited Columbia in 2005, Brad Smith and Missouri pulled away for a 41-24 victory.



Texas Tech's Graham Harrell led the Big 12 as a sophomore, passing for 4,555 yards and 38 touchdowns.

THE ESTABLISHMENT

Graham Harrell, Texas Tech 412-617-11 (66.8)	6-2, 196 Jr. 4,555 yards 38 TDs	Ennis, Texas
Chase Daniel, Missouri 287-452-10 (63.5)	6-0, 225 Jr. 3,527 yards 28 TDs	Southlake, Texas
Colt McCoy, Texas 217-318-7 (68.2)	6-3, 205 So. 2,570 yards 29 TDs	Tuscola, Texas
Bret Meyer, Iowa State 211-374-12 (56.4)	6-3, 204 Sr. 2,546 yards 12 TDs	Atlantic, Iowa
Stephen McGee, Texas A&M 194-313-2 (62.0)	6-3, 205 Jr. 2,295 yards 12 TDs	Burnet, Texas
Bobby Reid, Oklahoma State 148-267-11 (55.4)	6-3, 235 Jr. 2,266 yards 24 TDs	Houston, Texas
Josh Freeman, Kansas 140-270-15 (51.9)	6-6, 238 So. 1,780 yards 6 TDs	Kansas City, Mo.

the Oklahoma-Texas game to be in San Antonio on Dec. 1. One or the other has played in the conference championship game nine of 11 times, with Oklahoma appearing in five of the last seven — and winning four.

Nebraska has played in four, tying Colorado for the most in the North. If the Cornhuskers are to reach a fifth, they'll probably have to win in Columbia for the first time since 2001.

Winning on Oct. 6, in Dallas as well as in Columbia, won't guarantee anything, of course. But a victory in those showdown games could be an import step in the race to the Alamodome.

QUARTERBACK UNCERTAINTY, OR NOT

Typically, when handicapping teams that appear to be evenly matched, the nod goes to the one with a more experienced quarterback, which means Texas in the South, Missouri in the North.

The value of an experienced quarterback is obvious. He handles the ball on every offensive play. His is "arguably the most important position on the field," said Texas coach Mack Brown, "because if you don't have him, you can have a great team around him and nobody will ever see them win."

Brown certainly has "him" in sophomore Colt McCoy, the most efficient passer in the conference and the eighth-most efficient nationally. What Brown doesn't have, is a back-up for McCoy. That competition, between freshmen John Chiles and Sherrod Harris, needs to be settled during the preseason.

Missouri coach Gary Pinkel has both a proven starter in Chase Daniel and a back-up, sophomore Chase Patton, who played well in the spring. Daniel's spring statistics were remarkable, by the way, 47-of-59 pass completions for 697 yards and eight touchdowns, with just two interceptions.

In contrast, Oklahoma and Nebraska have yet to identify starters, much less back-ups. So why would they be picked for a rematch of last season's Big 12 title game? Good question.

Nebraska, at least, has some experience at the critical

position, albeit elsewhere. Sam Keller was Arizona State's starter before a thumb injury ended his junior season. However, his primary competition for the job, junior Joe Ganz, has spent more time learning coach Bill Callahan's system.

Callahan expects to settle on one or the other "around the second or third week" of training camp, "right in there, when the guys are in full pads, you're doing a little scrimmaging, the pressure's on a little bit more, your packages, most of it is installed at that time," he said.

Because NCAA rules require "five days of acclimation, primarily in shorts . . . I wouldn't say any sooner than the second week, most likely around the third week," said Callahan.

Whatever the time frame, either Keller or Ganz has to take charge — Callahan's system doesn't allow for rotating quarterbacks — if the Cornhuskers are to repeat as division champions.

And repeating won't be easy even if one does.

On paper, at least, Missouri would seem to have the advantage, and not just because the head-to-head game will be played at home, with the off-week to heal from any injuries.

In addition to Daniel, the Tigers have outstanding receivers, including Will Franklin and tight ends Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman, as well as tailback Tony Temple, one of only two Big 12 backs to rush for 1,000 yards. The other was Jon Cornish of Kansas, who has completed his eligibility.

Missouri's concern is defense, though Pinkel predicts talented young players will come through as Daniel did last season following the departure of versatile Brad Smith.

Still, Nebraska devised an effective defensive scheme to deal with Daniel last season. Major Culbert essentially shadowed him. He was limited to a net of 13 yards rushing, and though he passed for 244 yards and two touchdowns, he was intercepted twice in the 34-20 loss.

Plus, the last two trips to Columbia notwithstanding, history might be on Nebraska's side. Missouri hasn't won any kind of championship since 1969. The Tigers often

haven't played to their potential. For example, they opened last season with six victories then lost five of their last seven to go 4-4 in the conference, good for second in the division, a third consecutive runner-up finish.

With an established quarterback, Oklahoma might be a national championship contender. The Sooners have enough offensive firepower, despite the departure of tailback Adrian Peterson. None of their backs have "the physical stature with the endurance and strength of Adrian that he could play 60 snaps or so," coach Bob Stoops said. "We're going to be able to use them all in different ways."

The plan is to "get them all 20, 25 snaps... between three or four of them and give them an opportunity to keep them fresh, and keep them fast," he said.

Rushing success depends on other factors, including the offensive line, and Oklahoma has a good one, with starters at four positions returning. In contrast, Texas will have three new starters up front.

"We're going to be able to run the football," Stoops said.

And despite the fact the Big 12 is becoming increasingly pass-oriented, with a premium placed on big-bodied wide receivers, the ability to run the ball remains essential.

Oklahoma has quality receivers, most prominently Malcolm Kelly. But someone capable of getting them the ball has to step forward in pre-season practice since no one did in the spring.

None of Stoops' choices is experienced. Sam Bradford is a redshirted freshman. Keith Nichol is a true freshman who enrolled in January. And Joey Halzle is a junior who played briefly in two games, after transferring from Golden West (Calif.) Community College.

Early in the spring, they all "made some poor decisions here and there that obviously hurt them and hurt the offense," Stoops said. But that wasn't necessarily negative.

"I think you only get that stinging feeling by doing it," said Stoops. "I felt they all have the ability to make the throws we need. It's just continuing to improve on decision-making and avoiding the poor decisions. They've made strong improvement already, but there's still a long time to go."

Stoops, the Big 12 Coach of the Year, dealt with a difficult quarterback situation last season (as well as Peterson's being sidelined) and still produced a team that lost only three games, two of them by a lone point. The exception was a 28-10 loss against Texas, the first Saturday in October.

Oklahoma and Nebraska might have an edge on their divisional challengers defensively, although the Cornhuskers are replacing their entire front and their secondary has to play better. The Sooners have arguably the Big 12's best secondary but need some new linebackers and ends to step up.

The South Division, which was 13-5 against the North

last season, again appears to be stronger. Texas A&M and possibly Oklahoma State would be among the favorites in the North. Both have proven and efficient quarterbacks, two quality running backs and talented receivers.

Both play Texas at home but have to travel to Norman.

Texas Tech has the most prolific passer in the conference, as well as one of the most prolific in the country, Graham Harrell, the Red Raiders' first returning starter in the past four seasons. According to coach Mike Leach, however, Harrell will have to earn the job in the fall. Redshirted freshman Taylor Potts "has had as impressive of a start as I've seen," Leach said following spring practice.

Baylor will have the oldest quarterback in the conference. Michael

Machen, a graduate student, played professional baseball out of high school in Mobile, Ala., then went from Alabama to Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College to Kent State before finding his way to Waco, Texas.

Nebraska and Missouri are clear-cut favorites in the North, with the other four teams battling to finish in the top half. Iowa State, which finished last in the North after being picked to contend for the title, is a darkhorse under the conference's only new head coach, Gene Chizik.

The Cyclones have an experienced quarterback and outstanding wide receiver on offense and a pair of proven linebackers on defense, but they'll have to adjust to Chizik's system.

Kansas State also has an experienced quarterback and receiver to go with a defense that will give opposing quarterbacks fits. Ian Campbell led the Big 12 with 17 tackles-for-loss, including 11.5 sacks. Plus, the Wildcats have a season's experience under coach Ron Prince.

Colorado is in a similar situation, coach Dan Hawkins' second season, although the Buffaloes don't have a proven quarterback. On-going competition involves Hawkins' son, redshirted freshman Cody, and junior Nick Nelson, a mid-year transfer from Saddleback (Calif.) Community College.

Kansas also has to settle on a quarterback, although the top two candidates, both sophomores, have seen action. In fact, Kerry Meier started until he suffered a shoulder injury, providing an opportunity for Todd Reesing, who was pulled from a redshirt in the ninth game of the season.

Coach Mark Mangino doesn't expect to rotate the two. "We feel for the first time we have two starting quarterbacks," he said. "But we're looking for one of the two to take the job over."

Florida won the national championship with a two-quarterback system. But that's the exception rather than the rule. "The old adage with coaches is that if you've got two that are playing then you don't have a starter," Texas' Brown said. "That's a difficult thing if they're getting equal snaps." ■



The Big 12's only new head coach is former Texas assistant Gene Chizik, who took over for long-time Iowa State coach Dan McCarney.

Iowa State Sports Information

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MISSOURI TIGERS

Oct. 6, Columbia, Mo.

Six games into last season, Gary Pinkel had positioned himself to be the Big 12 coach of the year, according to at least one conference-area sports writer. And with good reason.

The Tigers had a 6-0 record to start a season for the first time since 1973, the Al Onofrio era. They were the only remaining undefeated team in the conference. And they looked every bit capable of winning the North Division, where parity seemed to be the order of the day.

Then came a 25-19 loss at Texas A&M, no disgrace there really, except for going minus-3 on turnovers and allowing the Aggies 403 total yards, including 180 rushing.

And that was followed by a 41-21 victory against a decent Kansas State team. So with a 7-1 record, Pinkel's conference-coach-of-the-year candidacy appeared to be intact.

The Kansas State game provided evidence of an alarming trend, however. The Tigers, who led the nation in total defense four games into the season, had allowed 262 rushing yards.

Stopping the run in Big 12 play would prove to be Missouri's Achilles heel, as it lost the next three games and, after a victory against Kansas, the Sun Bowl game against Oregon State.

Instead of a divisional title and a trip to Kansas City for the Big 12 championship game, the Tigers finished in a second-place tie with Kansas State, an outstanding season turned good, at 8-5.

Ordinarily, rehashing the previous season is of little consequence. In Missouri's case, however, the past is always present. Great expectations, based on talent, have consistently gone awry.

So even though eight starters return from a Missouri offense that ranked second in the conference and eighth

nationally, more attention is directed at a run-vulnerable defense that lost six starters.

The Tigers ranked next-to-last in rushing defense in conference games, allowing 4.5 yards per carry and 184.1 yards per game. They tried to address the problem during the spring. "There are some little things we're doing differently," said Pinkel. "I think we've got to play a little more physical.

"That certainly will help. But we've got to show improvement in that. We've done some scheme things to help us. We haven't changed the structure of our defense in any way. You look at things you can do to improve. People that play us . . . do a lot of ball control, so we understand that."

Key players on defense include nose tackle Lorenzo Williams and cornerback Darnell Terrell, both of whom earned all-conference honorable mention, and middle linebacker Brock Christopher, who played strongside linebacker last season and was credited with 87 tackles, fourth-best on the team.

In addition to the spring emphasis on more physical play, "we have a lot of team speed (on defense)," Pinkel said. "I think our depth on defense is young, but it is

very talented. I'm encouraged. I think we've got a ways to go, but I think we potentially can be a good defensive football team."

During the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference in mid-April, Pinkel compared his comments about that defensive potential to comments he made about his offense following the departure of quarterback Brad Smith. "I said we had a lot of players on offense that could really be impact players in the Big 12, and I'd be disappointed if I didn't see that. And that happened," he said.

Missouri Sports Information



Chase Daniel set school single-season records for passing yards (3,527), touchdowns (28) and total offense (3,906).

"So hopefully, I'm right about this, too. Time will tell."

Prominent among those young offensive players about whom he talked a year ago was Smith's successor, Chase Daniel, who passed for five touchdowns in his first start and never looked back, setting school single-season records for passing yards (3,527), touchdowns (28) and total offense (3,906). He also set a school record by passing for 300 or more yards in four games.

The rugged junior from Southlake, Texas, "can certainly get better at a lot of things, be able to see and make the different types of throws that the defense gives us," said Pinkel.

"He'll be able to not only go through the reads but he'll go through all his main reads and will recognize coverage and be able to go to different parts of the field."

Daniel "works very, very hard," Pinkel said. "He's never one of those guys who sits back and thinks, 'Well, I'm a pretty good player.' He's working hard right now, as hard as he ever has."

"He'll be a much improved player next year, than he was last year."

Daniel is surrounded by talent and experience. Tailback Tony Temple is the leading returning rusher in the conference, after gaining 1,063 yards to rank second behind Jon Cornish of Kansas, and the top four receivers are back, including tight ends Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman.

Coffman, technically

the , led in receptions with 58 for 638 yards and nine touchdowns, while Rucker caught 53 passes for 511 yards and five touchdowns. Senior Will Franklin caught 48 passes for a team-high 839 yards and six touchdowns. And Jared Perry's numbers were 37, 429 and three.

Add some young receivers and Daniel will have choices, as well as time to make them, with a line that includes three returning starters: Tyler Luellen, Adam Spieker and Ryan Madison. Luellen, the all-important left tackle, and Spieker, the center, are touted as honors candidates.

The Tigers' punting needs to improve, both in coverage and returns, but their place-kicking should rank with the best in the conference. Jeff Wolfert, who walked on after going to Missouri on a diving scholarship, set school records with 18 field goals (in 20 attempts) and 99 points.

Missouri again should have a showcase offense, one certainly potent enough to make the Tigers serious contenders in the Big 12's North Division. And the Tigers embrace such expectations.

But those expectations have been there in the past, only to fade as they did last season.

"You can talk about winning the Big 12 championship all you want, but with all those things, you just have to do it," Pinkel said after the Tigers' spring game. "We don't need to talk." ■ — By Mike Babcock



Tight end Chase Coffman led the Tigers with 58 catches for 638 yards and nine touchdowns.

Missouri Sports Information

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AT A GLANCE

2nd

PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

With eight returning starters, the offense again should be tough to handle, if only the defense can get it the ball often enough. **Martin Rucker** and **Chase Coffman** form the best tight end tandem in the country, no question. And **Jeff Wolfert** has shown he can provide almost-certain points when called upon.

QUESTION MARKS

Can Missouri get over the hump after three consecutive second-place finishes in the Big 12 North? The young and inexperienced defense is a concern. "There's no question about our run defense is our weakness," coach **Gary Pinkel** said. "We're going to work very hard to improve and make that better."

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Chase Daniel's teammates call him "the man," and for good reason.

FRESH FACES

Freshman linebackers **Michael Keck** and **Luke Lambert** graduated high school early and enrolled for the spring semester, the first freshmen to do so under Pinkel. "I think the maturity of the athlete has a lot to do with how they'll adjust," said Pinkel. "Some kids, it would be much more difficult (for them) than others. But these two kids are mature enough to handle it, and they've adjusted well."

SPEED TO BURN

Redshirted freshman wide receiver **Jeremy Maclin** ran a 4.3 40-yard dash in the spring. The 6-1, 185-pound Maclin, from Kirkwood, Mo., was rated the third overall prospect in-state by Rivals.com a year ago.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WRX	Will Franklin	6-2 205 Sr.	DE	Tommy Chavis	6-2 280 Jr.
	Jared Perry	6-1 170 So.		Jaysen Corbett	6-4 260 Jr.
LT	Tyler Luellen	6-7 295 Sr.	DT	Evander Hood	6-4 295 Jr.
	Colin Brown	6-8 325 Jr.		Charles Gaines	6-1 305 Sr.
LG	Ryan Madison	6-5 300 Jr.	NT	Lorenzo Williams	6-1 295 Jr.
	Jason Stigall	6-3 305 So.		Jason Baston	6-1 295 So.
C	Adam Spieker	6-3 305 Sr.	DE	Stryker Sulak	6-5 240 Jr.
	Tim Barnes	6-4 305 Fr.		Tarell Corby	6-3 235 So.
RG	Curtis Gregory	6-5 305 So.	WLB	Sean Weatherspoon	6-1 230 So.
	Monte Wyrick	6-5 325 Sr.		Michael Keck	6-5 215 Fr.
RT	Dan Wise	6-5 305 So.	MLB	Brock Christopher	6-2 240 Jr.
	Chris Tipton	6-4 310 Sr.		Luke Lambert	6-3 215 Fr.
TE	Martin Rucker	6-5 255 Sr.	SLB	Van Alexander	6-0 230 Jr.
	Chase Coffman	6-6 245 Jr.		Steve Redmond	6-0 235 Jr.
WRZ	Tommy Saunders	6-0 210 Jr.	CB	Darnell Terrell	6-3 205 Sr.
	Greg Bracey	6-2 215 Sr.		Castine Bridges	6-2 200 Jr.
WRH	Danario Alexander	6-4 205 So.	SS	Cornelius Brown	5-11 205 Sr.
	Jeremy Maclin	6-1 185 Fr.		Justin Garrett	6-2 200 Jr.
QB	Chase Daniel	6-0 225 Jr.	FS	William Moore	6-1 215 Jr.
	Chase Patton	6-5 220 Jr.		Mack Breed	6-1 205 Jr.
RB	Tony Temple	5-9 200 Sr.	CB	Hardy Ricks	6-0 190 So.
	Jimmy Jackson	5-9 200 Jr.		Paul Simpson	6-2 190 Sr.
PK	Jeff Wolfert	6-2 185 So.	P	Adam Crosslett	6-3 225 Sr.

Returning starters in bold

KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

Nov. 10, Lincoln

Say this about Ron Prince, he won't back down from a challenge.

In a point of departure from his predecessor, Bill Snyder, Kansas State's second-year head coach is taking on some nonconference toughies, and embracing the opportunity to do so.

The Wildcats are scheduled to open at Auburn on Sept. 1 and finish the regular season at Fresno State on Nov. 24. Playing such opponents "is going to do nothing but benefit us," Prince said.

Case in point: Kansas State added Louisville to last season's schedule, late, a game Prince was "very much in favor" of adding. And though the Wildcats lost, it had a positive effect.

"I don't think we would have won the Texas game," he said. "I don't think we'd have been able to play the way we played in that game without having the benefit of the Louisville game."

"It gave our kids, it gave our staff, it gave all of us a chance to see where we really were."

The 45-42 upset of Texas was a highlight of Prince's first season, one in which he directed a team picked to finish last in the Big 12's North Division for a third consecutive time to a second-place tie in the division, a winning record and a trip to the Texas Bowl to play Rutgers.

Though the bowl game turned into a Rutgers rout (37-10), the 7-6 season was a success.

And framing the 2007 season with the games at Auburn and Fresno State will enable the Wildcats to build on that, according to Prince. Both games are slated to be televised by ESPN, "so from a recruiting standpoint, our fans' standpoint, really getting out the message about Kansas State and having our logo behind those talking heads on television, really that's what this is about," he said.

"Our goal every year is to win the Big 12 North. That's

what we can accomplish with this schedule, help us to get ready. Our kids are really excited about it, and to have a chance to go play some of the very best programs in college football, they really look at it as fun. It's a challenge."

It also could affect Kansas State's bowl chances. Nebraska lost to Auburn in the Cotton Bowl game, of course, and though Fresno State endured its worst season since 1978, 4-8, the Bulldogs "are going to be back at the top of their game," said Prince. Plus, they're always tough at home.

Kansas State's season should be defined by the time it travels to Fresno, however, presumably with a more experienced Josh Freeman at quarterback, directing the offense.

Freeman, who originally committed to Nebraska out of Grandview High School in Kansas City, Mo., became the starter in the sixth game last season and finished strong, completing 78-of-121 passes for 925 yards and six touchdowns in the final four games, including the upset of Texas at Manhattan. But he struggled in the Texas Bowl, with six turnovers, and again in the Wildcats' spring intrasquad game.

Such problems aren't all on him, though. "I thought there were some games last year in which we were able to put together game plans and opportunities for him to really show what he could do," Prince said.

"And then there were some other times when I felt maybe we didn't do as good of a job."

For the season, Freeman completed 140-of-270 passes (51.9 percent) for 1,780 yards and six touchdowns. He was intercepted 15 times. He rushed for a net of -21 yards and scored two touchdowns.

"It's all of us," Prince said. "It's a collective effort. I think we have a very talented player. He's obviously very willing, and with his maturity and development, I think he's going to be a very exciting player. We just told him,

Kansas State Sports Information



Josh Freeman became the starter in the sixth game and finished strong, passing for 1,780 yards and six touchdowns.

"You're not a senior. We don't expect you to play like a senior. You're a sophomore."

Even so, Freeman is among the team captains for 2007. The others are senior wide receiver Jordy Nelson, junior outside linebacker Ian Campbell and senior linebacker Justin Roland.

Nelson and Campbell were walk-ons, as was senior safety Marcus Watts. Those are "our three very best players," Prince said. "If we could get the team to play with the mentality of those three players, how they've approached their individual careers, we think we could have a good team."



Kansas State Sports Information

Outside linebacker Ian Campbell led the Big 12 with 17.5 tackles for loss.

Watts was a coaches' second-team all-conference selection despite playing in only nine games, five as a starter, because of injury. He led the team with three interceptions, returning one 68 yards against Marshall, and added two sacks and two forced fumbles.

Senior linebacker Justin Roland was among others playing well during spring practice, on a 3-4 defense that figures to be the strength of the team under new coordinator Tim Tibesar, who coached special teams last season. Tibesar replaced Raheem Morris, one of four full-time assistants and one graduate assistant, former Cornhusker Scott Frost, no longer on Prince's staff.

The staff's extreme makeover after just one season is a reflection of "an era of coaching free agency," according to Prince. "I think that the economic model that has been put in place at some institutions is really affecting salaries for assistant coaches and head coaches," he said. "It's just what it is."

"You have to react to it and find creative ways to find people or keep or retain them."

Dealing with such change requires "having a consistent message coming from the top and a program-wide message of how we play and the things that are important, the skills and fundamentals that are consistent . . . the message from the top would stay the same," Prince said.

Making sure it does is another challenge he has accepted. ■ — By Mike Babcock



PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

Expect the Wildcats again to have exceptional special-teams play, a **Ron Prince** emphasis reflected in the fact that they scored seven touchdowns on special teams last season. The defense should be solid and especially effective pressuring the passer. The secondary has experience.

QUESTION MARKS

Offensive consistency is a concern. The offensive line play has left much to be desired, and quarterback **Josh**

Freeman is still learning. He struggled in the Spring Game, finishing with 0 yards of total offense and throwing two interceptions as his team lost 19-0.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

However his position is defined, defensive end or outside linebacker in the Wildcats' new 3-4 base alignment, the offense must account for **Ian Campbell**.

EVEN BETTER

Kansas State led the nation in kickoff returns, so with kickoffs now coming from the 30-yard line instead of the 35, the Wildcats should be even more formidable in that phase. "From a coverage standpoint, we're all going to have to take a really good look at alternate types of kicks," said Prince. Three Wildcats returned kickoffs for touchdowns in 2006, and all three are back.

FAMILY TIES

Yes, redshirted freshman quarterback **Carson Coffman** is the younger brother of Missouri tight end **Chase Coffman** and the son of former Green Packer tight end **Paul Coffman**.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Cedric Wilson	6-1	190	Jr.	DE	Rob Jackson	6-4	253	Sr.
	Toney Coleman	6-1	209	Sr.		Brandon Balkcom	6-0	278	Jr.
LT	Alesana Alesana	6-4	286	Jr.	DT	Alphonso Moran	6-0	296	Jr.
	Gerard Spehrath	6-6	285	Jr.		Steven Cline	6-2	278	Sr.
LG	Caleb Handy	6-1	307	Jr.	DE	Moses Manu	6-2	260	Sr.
	Brad Rooker	6-6	288	Jr.		Mike Abana	6-7	295	Jr.
C	Jordan Bedore	6-3	297	Jr.	OLB	Ian Campbell	6-5	242	Jr.
	Trevor Viers	6-5	265	So.		Ross Diehl	6-2	215	So.
RG	Logan Robinson	6-8	315	Sr.	ILB	Reggie Walker	6-1	231	Jr.
	Brock Unruh	6-5	295	So.		John Houlik	5-11	215	So.
RT	Nick Stringer	6-6	265	So.	ILB	Justin Roland	6-0	245	Sr.
	Derek Meyer	6-6	310	So.		Marcus Perry	6-2	223	Sr.
TE	Rashad Norwood	6-3	234	Sr.	OLB	Eric Childs	6-3	227	Sr.
	Jeron Mastrud	6-6	250	So.		Antwon Moore	5-10	210	Jr.
SLT	Jordy Nelson	6-3	217	Sr.	CB	Justin McKinney	5-9	191	Sr.
	Matt Wykes	6-2	212	Jr.		Ray Cheatham	6-0	185	Sr.
WR	Daniel Gonzalez	6-4	219	Sr.	FS	Marcus Watts	6-1	189	Sr.
	Tony Purvis	5-11	167	So.		Chris Carney	6-1	185	Sr.
QB	Josh Freeman	6-6	250	So.	SS	Andrew Erker	6-1	187	Jr.
	Carson Coffman	6-3	200	Fr.		Gary Chandler	5-11	195	Jr.
RB	James Johnson	5-11	200	Sr.	CB	Joshua Moore	5-11	187	So.
	Leon Patton	5-7	187	So.		Bryan Baldwin	5-10	192	Sr.
PK	Brooks Rossman	6-0	178	Jr.	P	Tim Reyer	5-11	201	Sr.

Returning starters in bold

KANSAS JAYHAWKS

Nov. 3, Lawrence, Kan.

The matter was one of semantics, really. But Kansas coach Mark Mangino wanted to avoid any misunderstanding when asked about his team's quarterback situation.

During the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference, a reporter wanted to know Mangino's level of concern regarding the fact that the situation had yet to be "resolved."

"When you say 'resolved,' resolved means it's a problem," Mangino replied. "And I don't see a problem. Now, certainly, I've stated in the past and I'll state again, I would like to have one guy be the No. 1 quarterback and he'd be the guy. I think that's the way it will play out."

If not, however, "a lot of teams have proven you can win rotating quarterbacks."

The example he offered was compelling, 2006 national champion Florida.

"It would be my hope that someone would emerge as we continue repetitions into two-a-days and continue to put them in difficult situations, (that) one of them will surface as the No. 1 guy," said Mangino. "But the No. 2 guy won't be far behind because we feel for the first time we have two starting quarterbacks. But we're looking for one of the two to take the job over."

The two are both sophomores, Kerry Meier and Todd Reesing. And if Meier hadn't suffered an injury to his right shoulder last season, Mangino might not be dealing with semantics now.

Meier won the starting job over senior Adam Barmann as a redshirted freshman last season, while Reesing, who graduated high school in Austin, Texas, early and went through spring practice a year ago, was slated to redshirt. And to that end he didn't play in the first eight games.

But because of Meier's shoulder injury and Barmann's

lack of success (Nebraska fans would find that surprising given his performance in Lincoln) Reesing was pulled from the redshirt.

He replaced Barmann in the third quarter of the ninth game against Colorado and led a comeback victory, with three touchdown drives, finishing two with passes and the other with a run. In the brief appearance, he completed 7-of-11 passes for 106 yards and rushed for 90 yards.

His rushing total was bolstered by a 63-yard run.

Reesing would come off the bench in two other games, as Meier's, and put himself in position to compete for the starting job in spring practice. He finished 14-of-24 for 203 yards and rushed for another 106 and two touchdowns.

The uncertainty at quarterback wasn't a problem for other players during the spring, according to Mangino. "I think that we're in a situation where our players believe both of these guys are quality players," he said. "I don't see anything different in terms of how the team reacts."

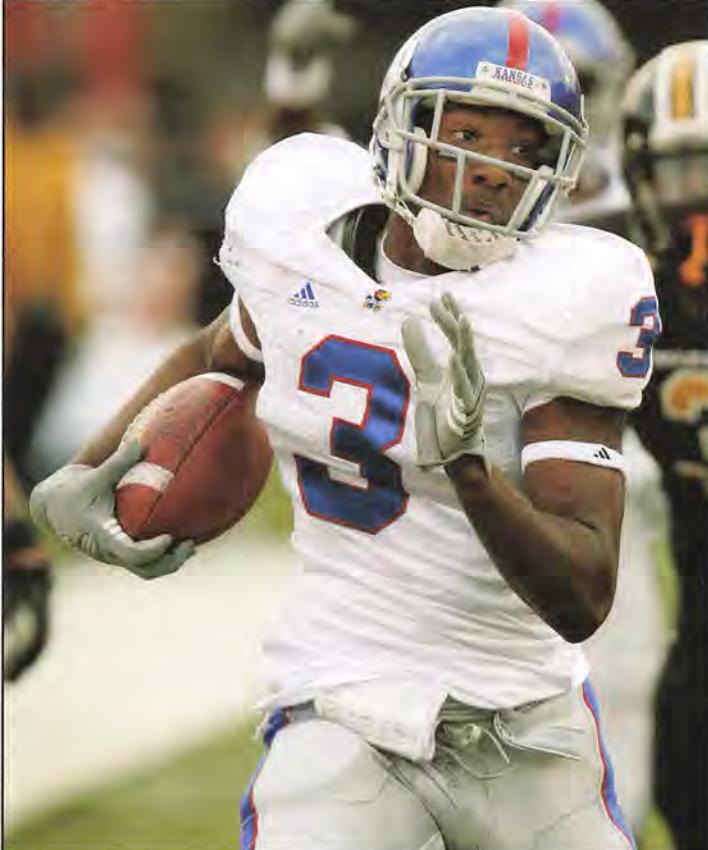
The two are dramatically different physically. Meier is 6-foot-3 and 215 pounds, while Reesing is listed, generously some would say, at 5-11 and 190 pounds.

Obviously, Meier has more experience, playing in eight games, all as a starter, and completing 104-of-184 passes (56.5 percent) for 1,193 yards and 13 touchdowns with 10 interceptions. He also was the team's second-leading rusher, with 346 yards and five touchdowns on 99 carries.

Meier's rushing total is significant mostly because it underscores the loss of tailback Jon Cornish, who broke the 10-year-old school single-season rushing record, gaining 1,457 yards and averaging a Big 12-best (and seventh nationally) 121.4 yards per game.

In addition, the running game will have to be rebuilt with an offensive line including only two returning

Jeff Jacobson/Kansas Athletics



Junior cornerback Aqib Talib, who had six interceptions to tie for first in the Big 12, could get some time on offense at wide receiver.

starters, tackles Cesar Rodriguez and Anthony Collins. And fullback Brandon McAnderson, chosen to the coaches' All-Big 12 second team, might have more ball-carrying duties. In 2006, he carried 31 times for 122 yards and five touchdowns. Sophomore Jake Sharp played in all 12 games and averaged 6.1 yards on his 21 carries.

As for the passing game, three of the top four receivers return, including Dexton Fields and Marcus Henry, who finished spring practice impressively, catching six passes for 150 yards and three touchdowns in the spring game. The 6-4, 200-pound senior from Lawton, Okla., could have a breakout season.

There isn't a lot of proven depth at wide receiver, however.

The offense has an old face as the new coordinator, Ed Warinner, a former Jayhawk assistant who spent the past two seasons as run game coordinator and offensive line coach at Illinois.



Jeff Jacobson/Kansas Athletics

Senior fullback Brandon McAnderson might have more ball-carrying duties.

honorable mention, and linebackers Mike Rivera and Joe Mortensen.

Rivera, also an all-conference honorable mention recipient, led the team with 90 tackles playing the middle, while Mortensen tied for second on the team with 82 tackles from the strongside. Mortensen moved to the middle in the spring, however, and finished ahead of Rivera on the depth chart.

"We're going to play that position by committee, several places in the defensive line and the secondary the same," said defensive coordinator Bill Young.

Linebacker by committee is one thing. Quarterback by committee is another. Few coaches are comfortable with such a system. "You can only play one and that's where the competition is, who is going to surface to the top by the time we play our first game and take control," Mangino said.

"But the good news is we feel for the first time in a long time, maybe since we've been here, that if something would happen to one of them, we feel like a quality quarterback is going to come in the game, and not just a type of guy, a starter type guy."

So the competition between Meier and Reesing will continue in the fall.

"Yes it will," said Mangino. ■ — By Mike Babcock



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Kansas always has an outstanding linebacker or two and this season is no different, with

Joe Mortensen and **Mike Rivera**, or Rivera and Mortensen, in the middle. The two are friends, by the way. They have even been roommates. Coach **Mark Mangino** considers an undecided situation at quarterback to be a positive, with a quality, whoever it is.

QUESTION MARKS

There are many. Can the Jayhawks play better pass defense than they did last season? They have no place to go except up after ranking No. 119 out of a possible 119 in NCAA Division I-A. Can they get more pressure on the quarterback? "I think that area will be much improved for us," said Mangino. And can they mount a running attack following the departure of **Jon Cornish**?

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

The talented **Aqib Talib** could get some playing time on offense, at wide receiver, following in the footsteps of former Jayhawk **Charles Gordon**.

ON THE ROAD

If the Jayhawks expect to move to the next level and compete for a North Division title, they will have to figure out how to win on the road. Under Mangino they are 2-18 in conference road games.

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FB Brandon McAnderson	6-0 235 Sr.	CB Kendrick Harper	5-11 185 So.
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Returning starters in bold

TEXAS LONGHORNS

Oct. 27, Austin, Texas

Entering the 2007 season, Mack Brown finds himself facing an extremely familiar predicament. The Texas head coach is looking for one of two freshmen to emerge at the quarterback position.

Backup quarterback, that is.

While the prize of last year's competition between red-shirt freshman Colt McCoy and true freshman Jevan Snead was the starting job, this spring's battle between Sherrod Harris and John Chiles is for the under-study role. Normally, second-team position battles don't garner significant attention but, after the events of last season, Brown knows how critical the backup quarterback could be to the ultimate success of his team.

As for McCoy, the past year has been nothing short of miraculous. After edging Snead for the starting job last year, McCoy demonstrated a level of poise beyond his years while becoming the first freshman quarterback in Texas history to win 10 games. He started all 13 games, threw for a record six touchdown passes in a win over Baylor and was a semifinalist for the Davey O'Brien Award. The Longhorns flourished under the leadership of McCoy, who led his team to eight straight wins after a loss to No. 1 Ohio State in the second game of the season. With Texas ranked fourth in the nation, the unthinkable happened on a blustery night in Manhattan, Kansas.

While scoring a touchdown on the Longhorns' opening drive of the game, McCoy sustained an injury to his right shoulder that kept him sidelined for the remainder of the contest. Snead came off the bench in what was his first action of the season and proceeded to complete just 13 of his 30 pass attempts in a 45-42 loss. Following that game, Brown said that he didn't want to find himself in a position where he had to rely upon a backup quarterback with no game experience. That is exactly what Brown

must contend with after Snead transferred to Ole Miss rather than potentially play second fiddle to McCoy for another three years.

With Snead out of the mix, Brown and offensive coordinator Greg Davis closely monitored the progress of both Harris and Chiles this spring. What the coaches saw were two young quarterbacks who can run. In the spring game, Harris broke loose for a 75-yard touchdown scamper, while Chiles scored on a dazzling 28-yard burst that rendered Longhorn defenders virtually defenseless. While Harris may have a slight edge based upon his being in the system for a full season, Chiles is certainly a viable candidate to get some early playing time.

"What we would like to do is get them separated and get one to play in every game and help Colt," Brown said. "Colt is the starter, period. He's done great but, so we don't have a situation come back up like Kansas State, we do need one of the other guys to get some plays in the games early next year."

Quarterback isn't the only position in the backfield where Brown sees a question mark. Jamaal Charles, who has shown flashes of brilliance during his two seasons at Texas, has also been beset by injuries that have limited his productivity. Brown is hopeful that he can give

Charles 25 to 30 touches per game; however, the junior's injury history and a lack of depth at tailback are causes for concern. The Longhorns no longer have the steady Selvin Young, who exhausted his eligibility, and Henry Melton, who was moved to defensive end at the end of last season.

Depth is not a problem at receiver, where Texas is loaded with talent. Senior Limas Sweed is primed for a monster season after snaring 12 touchdown passes, including a school-record seven-game streak with at least one scoring grab, in 2006. A certain first-round pick had he decided to make himself eligible for the NFL Draft, Sweed

Texas Sports Information



Colt McCoy had an outstanding season as a redshirted freshman, completing 68 percent of his passes for 2,570 yards.

starters, tackles Cesar Rodriguez and Anthony Collins. And fullback Brandon McAnderson, chosen to the coaches' All-Big 12 second team, might have more ball-carrying duties. In 2006, he carried 31 times for 122 yards and five touchdowns. Sophomore Jake Sharp played in all 12 games and averaged 6.1 yards on his 21 carries.

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Jeff Jacobson/Northeast Athletics

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Returning starters in bold

IOWA STATE CYCLONES

Sept. 29, Lincoln

No question, Gene Chizik is happy to be the head coach at Iowa State.

During his 10-minute segment of the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference in mid-April, he used the word "fun" five times, and included "really" with three of the five.

In addition, he was quoted as having a "blast" during the Cyclones' spring game.

"It is great when you are head coach," he said afterward.

Chizik's enthusiasm is understandable. After 21 years as an assistant, beginning at the high school level in Florida and including two seasons as a grad assistant at Clemson, he's in charge.

"I've enjoyed every minute of being the head coach here at Iowa State," he said during the teleconference. "And hopefully it'll continue to be that way."

There's the rub, of course. Spring is a time for optimism.

Chizik comes to Ames, Iowa, from Texas, where he was Mack Brown's assistant head coach and co-defensive coordinator the past two seasons. Prior to that, he was defensive coordinator and secondary coach at Auburn for three seasons, and before that, he held the same positions at Central Florida.

Athletic Director Jamie Pollard introduced him as Iowa State's new coach nine days after the Cyclones' final game, a 21-16 upset of Missouri — their only conference victory.

Chizik replaces Dan McCarney, who announced in early November he would step aside after the season. McCarney was the winningest coach in school history, with the longest tenure.

The Iowa State community was divided, however, McCarney said in announcing his resignation, and "I know what is at the bottom of that is just that we have really struggled this year."

The Cyclones finished 1-7 in the Big 12, after being

considered a North Division contender.

Chizik won't have to deal with such lofty expectations in his first season. The Cyclones will have to learn new systems on offense and defense, with new coaches and only a handful of returning starters from a team that ranked near the bottom of the conference in both total offense and total defense.

The most prominent of the returning starters include quarterback Bret Meyer, wide receiver Todd Blythe, linebacker Alvin Bowen and place-kicker Bret Culbertson, all of them seniors.

Meyer, who will be starting for a fourth season, already holds school-career records for total offense (7,979 yards) and touchdown passes (41). His total offense yardage is the most nationally by a returning player, and he ranks second to Michigan's Chad Henne in career passing yards (7,348).

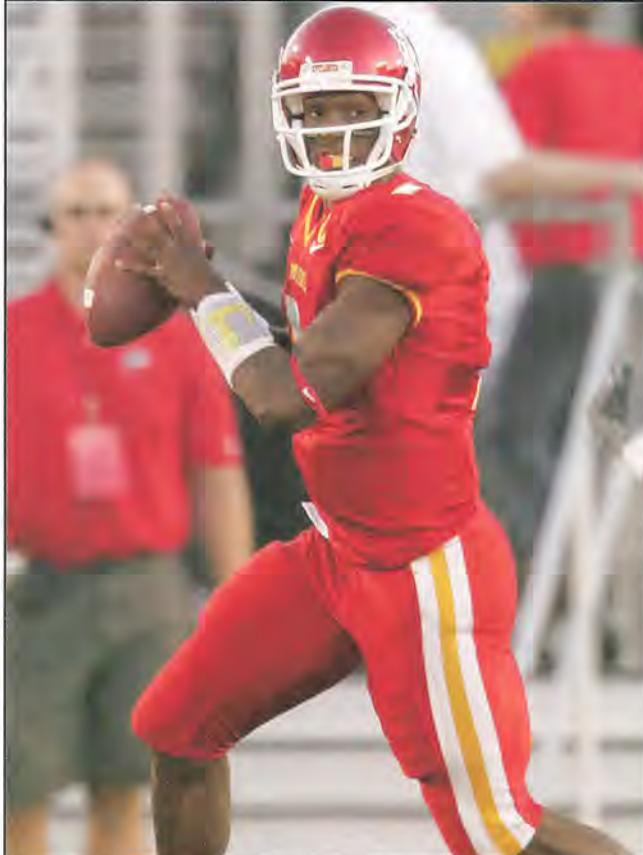
Blythe also has earned a place in the school record books with 26 touchdown catches during his career. And he ranks second on the school career list in receiving yards (2,317). He caught 34 passes for 484 yards and eight touchdowns last season, despite missing three weeks with a virus.

Last season's top two receivers are gone, however, and junior guard Tom Schmeling is the only returning starter from an offensive line that allowed a conference-high 38 sacks.

Keeping Meyer upright was an emphasis in the spring, and not just as it related to the line. "We want to try to run the ball in situations where you may not expect it to keep teams off-balance and get the quarterback out of the pocket in a position where he won't get sacked," said Chizik.

Effective pass protection involves not only the tailback and fullback blocking but also the quarterback knowing when to get rid of the ball. So "we are putting pressure on the entire offense to prevent sacks," Chizik said. "It is not

Iowa State Sports Information



Entering his fourth year as a starter, Bret Meyer holds school records for total offense and touchdown passes.

just about the offensive line. It is not always the line's fault."

The running game could use a boost from the line, too. Iowa State ranked 99th nationally in rushing last season, averaging just 3 yards per attempt and 101.8 yards per game.

Offensively, "you have to be able to run the football," while defensively, "you have to be able to stop the run," said Chizik. "And you can't give up any explosive plays."

The 6-foot-2, 216-pound Bowen did his part last season. He was credited with 155 tackles, for a nation-leading 12.91-per-game average. He made 17 in a 28-14 loss against Nebraska.

Tyrone McKenzie, the team's second-leading tackler with 129, was among the casualties of change. He transferred to Central Florida, where McCarney is now assistant head coach.

Other returning starters on defense include: nose guard Ahtyba Rubin, strongside linebacker Jon Banks, cornerback Chris Singleton and strong safety Caleb Berg.

The secondary, in particular, was a concern last season. The Cyclones ranked 115th nationally in pass efficiency defense. More specifically, opponents completed 72.5 percent of their passes for 2,862 yards and a Big 12-high 26 touchdowns, with only six interceptions.

Iowa State also was next-to-last in the conference in red zone defense, allowing 33 touchdowns.

Culbertson tied Blythe as the Cyclones' scoring leader with 48 points, making 8-of-11 field goal attempts and all 24 extra-point kicks. The former walk-on is the most accurate field goal kicker in school history, having made 28-of-37 (.757), including 5-of-10 from 40 yards or farther.

Meyer, Blythe, Schmeling and Culbertson all are from Iowa, and, predictably enough, in-state recruiting will be an emphasis. Iowa players will provide the program's foundation, according to Chizik, a Florida native. But for the Cyclones to be successful, they have to recruit elsewhere, too.

As a head coach "there's all different hats you have to wear," Chizik said. "What I find out is you can't bury yourself in a film room and computer room 24/7 to be able to do football things."

He now has many other responsibilities, from meeting with fans and boosters to setting up meal plans and identifying dorms in which to house his players. "It's eye-opening the number of things that aren't truly football, on-the-field related. So that's been an adjustment," he said.

"But again, I've had a blast, and it's been really fun doing it."

Check back in November. He might phrase things a little differently. ■ — *By Mike Babcock*



Iowa State Sports Information

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PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

An experienced quarterback is always a good place to begin and the Cyclones have that, as well as the most productive receiver in school history. They also have a playmaker at linebacker. But few other areas on either side of the ball are reason for optimism.

QUESTION MARKS

Coach **Gene Chizik** went looking for immediate help, and lots of it, a fact reflected in the recruitment of 11 junior college transfers. But there's always uncertainty about how quickly they'll adjust and how much they'll contribute. The offensive and defensive lines must be rebuilt, and returning players on both sides of the ball will have to adjust to new schemes. The secondary needs shoring up.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Quarterback **Bret Meyer** will have to make a difference if Chizik's new spread offense is to work.

EYES OF TEXAS

Chizik was asked during the Big 12 coaches' teleconference if he had marked Oct. 13 on his calendar. That's when Texas is scheduled to play in Ames. Not surprisingly, Chizik said his focus was on the opener against Kent State on Aug. 30. "We'll kind of take 'em one game at a time and try not to look forward to anything except the one right ahead of us," he said.

REMEMBER HIM?

Wallace Franklin is among the 11 junior college recruits. The leading receiver at Butler County (Kan.) last season, Franklin originally signed with Nebraska out of Ozen High School in Beaumont, Texas.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR Todd Blythe	6-5 210 Sr.	DE Kurtis Taylor	6-2 255 Jr.
Marquis Hamilton	6-3 220 So.	Travis Ferguson	6-5 250 Jr.
LT Doug Dedrick	6-4 276 So.	DT Bryce Braaksma	6-3 255 Sr.
Matt Hulbert	6-7 280 Fr.	Nick Howe	6-3 260 Sr.
LG Reggie Stephens	6-3 325 So.	NT Ahtyba Rubin	6-3 325 Sr.
Joe Blaes	6-2 300 Jr.	Nate Frere	6-2 310 So.
C Brandon Johnson	6-3 310 Jr.	DE Rashawn Parker	6-0 250 So.
Anthony Walker	6-2 290 Sr.	Nick Frere	6-2 245 Jr.
RG Tom Schmeling	6-3 295 Jr.	LB Jon Banks	6-2 220 Sr.
Alex Alvarez	6-2 290 So.	Derek Schmidgall	6-1 225 So.
RT Lee Tibbs	6-4 315 Sr.	LB Alvin Bowen	6-2 220 Sr.
Ben Lemaak	6-4 295 Fr.	Matt Leaders	6-0 210 Fr.
TE Ben Berkema	6-3 255 Sr.	LB Fred Garrin	6-1 220 So.
Brandon Tinlin	6-4 255 Sr.	Jesse Smith	6-0 235 So.
WR R.J. Sumrall	6-1 200 Jr.	CB Devin McDowell	5-9 175 Fr.
Euseph Messiah	5-10 175 Jr.	Drenard Williams	5-11 175 So.
WR Milan Moses	6-1 205 Sr.	S Caleb Berg	6-1 205 Sr.
Houston Jones	6-1 185 So.	Brandon Hunley	5-11 205 Jr.
QB Bret Meyer	6-3 205 Sr.	S James Smith	5-8 195 So.
Austen Arnaud	6-3 225 Fr.	Steve Johnson	5-11 200 So.
RB Jason Scales	5-9 220 Jr.	CB Chris Singleton	5-10 195 Jr.
Jason Harris	5-11 210 Jr.	Chris Brown	5-10 175 Jr.
PK Bret Culbertson	6-6 180 Sr.	P Michael Brandtner	6-1 210 So.

Returning starters in bold

COLORADO BUFFALOES

Nov. 23, Boulder, Colo.

A year ago during the university's spring break, which divided Colorado's spring football practice into two segments, Dan Hawkins went skydiving. This year, the coach's off-season adventure involves a trip to Australia to run in a marathon, evidence Hawkins embraces a challenge.

In fact, challenge was a factor in his decision to leave Boise State, where his teams were 53-11-0 in five seasons, for Boulder. He wanted to "reinvent myself and have to push it, scramble and figure things out," he said. "I figured it wasn't going to be easy, it was going to be a whole new set of adventures."

"And sure enough, it turned out that way."

Sure enough. The ride was extremely bumpy from the beginning.

To rewind ...

The first game of the Hawkins era was a 19-10 loss to NCAA Division I-AA Montana State, arguably the most embarrassing loss at Folsom Field since 1979-80, when the Buffaloes lost back-to-back games at home against Drake. The offense managed three first downs and no points in the second half against Montana State, prompting some of the 45,000-plus fans to express their disapproval.

Among the most enjoyable aspects of his first year in Boulder, Hawkins has said, was "the people. The people have been great, very supportive, very warm, very open, very vibrant." Though that wasn't necessarily the case on the second day of September, not for everyone anyway.

During the Big 12 coaches' weekly teleconference on the Monday following the Montana State game, Hawkins was asked, as each coach was, if he would like to begin his segment with an opening statement. "I think we already made our opening statement, unfortunately," he replied.

One season and two springs have made a significant

difference, however. After this year's spring game, offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said the Buffaloes had made a "180."

The previous spring, Helfrich said, his concern about what he had seen was such that he might have been non-communicative for about an hour after the spring game.

That wasn't the case this year. The team "improved a ton, made a lot of progress and stayed healthy," he said.

His comments were relative, of course. With only

seven offensive linemen, and six healthy at the end of spring, full scrimmaging was limited, and the Buffaloes were forced to do a lot of 7-on-7 work, even during the spring "game" — played, or rather conducted, for an audience of 5,800.

The line numbers underscore the task confronting Hawkins and his staff. Linemen weren't even listed at specific positions on the pre- and post-spring depth charts because of shuffling.

The spring roster included 74 players, 56 of them on scholarship. A large recruiting class will bolster that, and add seven offensive linemen, some of whom might play without redshirting.

The most likely candidate is 6-foot-8, 310-pound Ryan Miller, a first-team USA Today prep All-American at Columbine High in Littleton, Colo.

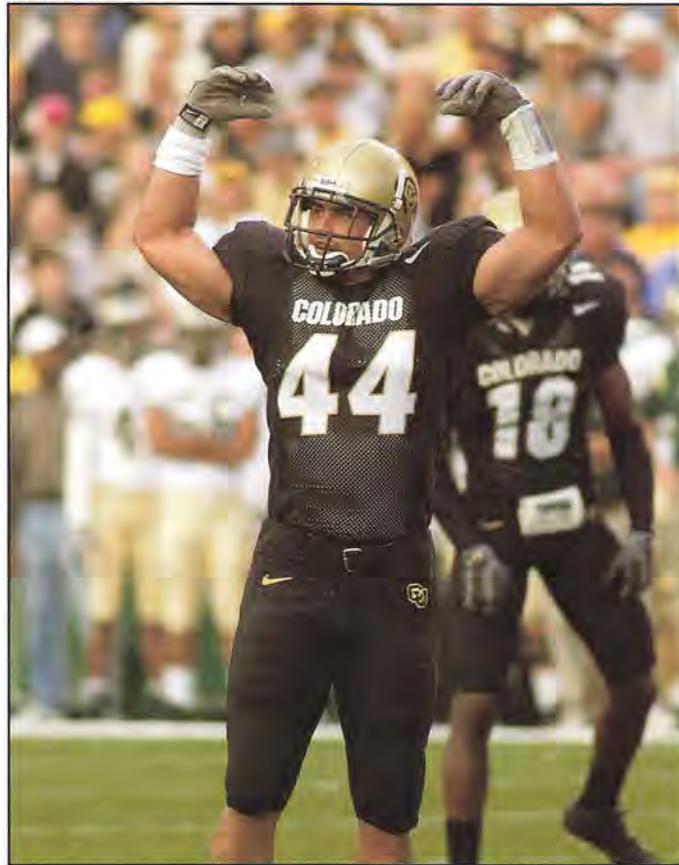
Miller is the state's only

representative on the first team and the first to pick the Buffaloes since 2000, a positive sign in recruiting.

Two other offensive linemen from the All-Colorado teams selected by the Rocky Mountain News and Denver Post, Ethan Adkins and Shawn Daniels, also will be arriving in the fall.

The line is the foundation, of course, so that has to develop if the Buffaloes are to improve offensively. And there is plenty of room for improvement. They ranked No. 102 nationally in total offense, No. 107 in scoring

Colorado Sports Information



Inside linebacker Jordon Dizon had eight games with 10 or more tackles, including a career-high 19 at Nebraska.

offense and No. 116 in passing offense in Hawkins' first season.

At best, the offense was inconsistent and didn't produce many big plays.

All things considered, quarterback Bernard Jackson was more productive running than passing. He rushed for 677 yards, second-most on the team, and seven touchdowns, while completing less than 50 percent of his passes for 1,298 yards and seven touchdowns, with seven interceptions.

As a result, though he was in quarterback meetings in the spring, he was listed at wide receiver on the depth chart, too, and figures to be used in various ways, running and receiving.



Colorado Sports Information

Cornerback Terrence Wheatley ranked third in the Big 12 with five interceptions.

example, 'Hey, I want this guy to be the starting quarterback.'

Inside linebacker Jordon Dizon and cornerback Terrence Wheatley are among those Hawkins and the other defensive coaches want as starters. There's little or no debate about that.

Dizon, chosen by teammates as the defensive captain (Jackson is captain of the offense), earned second-team All-Big 12 recognition with 137 tackles, including 11 for losses and four sacks, while Wheatley was named to the coaches' all-conference first team. Wheatley had 57 tackles and led the team in interceptions with five and pass deflections with 11.

The defense was more effective against the run than the pass, ranking No. 95 in the nation in pass efficiency, allowing 66.9 percent completions and 22 touchdowns with only 12 interceptions.

Oh yes, and after four seasons with Mason Crosby, place-kicking must be addressed.

Presumably the worst that could happen did in 2006, however. "There was no comparison to where we stood this spring compared to a year ago," said Hawkins.

"We targeted a few specific areas, including toughness, work ethic and attention to detail, and I feel we are light years ahead entering the summer than where we were at this point in 2006." ■ — By Mike Babcock



AT A GLANCE

6th

PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

Dan Hawkins is a proven winner, and there's no reason to think he won't turn Colorado into a winner again, in time. There's the hitch, time. Because of the problems that preceded him, talent and numbers have depreciated dramatically. Systems alone, no matter how sound, won't win consistently. The defense should be decent and probably will have to keep the Buffs in games again.

WEAKNESSES

As would be expected, there are questions aplenty coming off a 2-10 season, so you can take your pick. If the offense is to work, the passing game has to improve significantly, after ranking No. 116 nationally, and a line has to be fashioned.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Bernard Jackson has earned the nickname "Slash" from his teammates because of the many ways in which he was used in the spring.

POINTS ON THE BOARD

Despite their worst record since 1984, the Buffaloes kept their scoring streak alive. They have put points on the board in 222 consecutive games, the fifth-longest active streak in NCAA Division I-A and the 11th longest in NCAA history. The last time they were shut out was Nov. 12, 1988, at Nebraska.

NO MORE MASON

Place-kicker Mason Crosby provided insurance against being shut out the past four seasons, establishing a school record by scoring 307 points and earning All-America recognition the last three seasons.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WRX	Patrick Williams	6-2	200	Jr.	LE	Maurice Lucas	6-4	255	Jr.
LT	Cody Crawford	5-11	175	Jr.	DT	Drew Hudgins	6-4	235	Jr.
LG	Tyler Polumbus	6-8	300	Sr.	LG	George Hypolite	6-3	285	Jr.
C	Ryan Miller	6-8	310	Fr.	LG	Eric Lawson	6-3	260	Fr.
RG	Wes Palazzi	6-1	285	Fr.	LG	Brandon Nicolas	6-3	280	Jr.
RG	Keenan Stevens	6-3	275	Fr.	LG	Jason Brace	6-4	265	So.
RG	Keenan Stevens	6-3	305	Jr.	LG	Alonzo Barrett	6-3	235	Sr.
RG	Devon Head	6-4	285	So.	LG	Marquez Herrod	6-2	255	Fr.
RG	Devon Head	6-4	285	So.	LG	MLB Michael Sipili	6-1	250	So.
RT	Daniel Sanders	6-3	305	Jr.	LG	R.J. Brown	6-1	225	Jr.
RT	Edwin Harrison	6-4	300	Sr.	LG	WLB Jordon Dizon	6-0	225	Sr.
TE	Edwin Harrison	6-4	300	Sr.	LG	Marcus Burton	6-0	245	Jr.
TE	Riar Geer	6-3	245	So.	LG	SLB Brad Jones	6-3	225	Jr.
WRZ	Joe Sanders	6-3	235	Sr.	LG	Bryan Stengel	6-2	210	So.
WRZ	Alvin Barnett	5-11	190	Sr.	LG	Terrence Wheatley	5-10	175	Sr.
WRZ	Dusty Sprague	6-4	190	Sr.	LG	Jaiil Brown	6-1	205	Fr.
QB	Cody Hawkins	5-11	190	Fr.	LG	Ryan Walters	5-11	200	Jr.
QB	Nick Nelson	6-1	220	Jr.	LG	Terry Wilson	5-10	205	Jr.
TB	Hugh Charles	5-8	190	Sr.	LG	Lionel Harris	6-0	195	Sr.
TB	Byron Ellis	6-0	215	Sr.	LG	Daniel Dykes	6-2	205	Jr.
FB	Maurice Cantrell	6-0	240	Jr.	LG	RCB Benjamin Burney	5-11	195	Jr.
FB	Jake Behrens	6-0	230	So.	LG	Jimmy Smith	6-2	200	Fr.
PK	Kevin Eberhart	5-11	195	Sr.	LG	Matt DiLallo	6-1	205	So.

Returning starters in bold

OKLAHOMA SOONERS

To truly appreciate where Oklahoma is going in 2007, it is imperative to look back to 2006.

Imagine what it must have been like to be in the shoes of Bob Stoops on Aug. 3 of last year. The first day of fall practice was less than 24 hours away when news surfaced that a pair of key offensive starters, quarterback Rhett Bomar and guard J.D. Quinn, were dismissed from the team for violating NCAA rules.

Receiver Paul Thompson, who had been named the starting quarterback at the outset of the 2005 season before losing his job to Bomar after one game, was asked by Stoops to move back under center. Not only did Thompson keep the ship steady through choppy waters, he became the third Sooner quarterback since World War II to complete at least 60 percent of his passes in a season.

Now, envision being in Stoops' shoes on Sept. 16. With his team nursing a 13-point lead at Oregon, the Sooners allowed a touchdown with just more than a minute to go. What ensued will go down as one of the most controversial endings to a college game in recent memory: an onside kick, an illegal touch and a missed call that gave possession to Oregon, which ultimately won the game, 34-33. The officials were reprimanded by the Pac-10 Conference, but the result stood.

After dropping their Big 12 opener to Texas, the Sooners found their stride and snapped off eight straight victories. They did that despite the loss of potential Heisman Trophy winner Adrian Peterson, who broke his collarbone while diving into the end zone at the end of a dazzling touchdown run against Iowa State. Although Peterson missed seven of the eight games during the winning streak, the Sooners won their 40th conference championship by beating Nebraska in the Big 12 title game. Their efforts were rewarded with a berth in the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, where

they were matched against a powerful, but largely unheralded, Boise State team.

In one of the most exciting bowl games ever, Boise State executed a hook-and-ladder play that resulted in a 50-yard touchdown in the waning moments to send the game into overtime. After a Peterson touchdown that put OU up seven, the Broncos responded with two trick plays and a place in the history books. Boise State's bizarre 43-42 win put the wraps on what had been an equally bizarre season for Oklahoma.

Stoops would like nothing more than a return to normalcy in 2007. That means beating Texas, winning the Big 12 and contending for a national championship. In order to accomplish those things, however, Stoops may have to pull off his greatest coaching feat yet.

For starters, Peterson declared for the NFL Draft and was a first-round selection of the Minnesota Vikings. On top of that, the three quarterbacks vying for the starting job have thrown a combined two passes. Replacing Peterson won't be easy, but Stoops points to the fact that his team's rushing output actually increased while his star running back was sidelined last year.

"Not only did it not drop off for the games that Adrian didn't play, we were actually rushing the football for 30 more yards per game than when we had Adrian," Stoops said.

"We love the backs we have. They're all kind of different in style but our offense doesn't change with them."

Peterson's injury paved the way for others to gain valuable experience, which will greatly benefit the Sooners this year. Senior Allen Patrick, a converted defensive back, carried the bulk of the load by toting the ball 169 times for 761 yards and four scores. He will enter the season as the starter, but sophomore Chris Brown will also see plenty of action. Brown was thrust into duty last

©National Sports Information



Junior Malcolm Kelly was among the Big 12 leaders in receptions (62), receiving yards (993) and touchdown catches (10).

season as a true freshman, while two other talented youngsters, Mossis Madu and DeMarco Murray, redshirted and will see their first action this fall. Rounding out the backfield depth is senior Jacob Gutierrez, who stands just 5-6 but bench presses 420 pounds and is an extremely tough runner.

With its running back rotation solidified this spring, the situation at quarterback is not as secure. None of the three potential starters separated himself from the pack, but Stoops doesn't want to force the issue by naming a starter prematurely.

"You're only respected in the huddle when you have earned the position," Stoops said when asked for a time-frame on naming a starter. "These guys need time to earn it, to build confidence with their teammates. That isn't given to anybody. It just takes time."



Oklahoma Sports Information

Junior cornerback Reggie Smith is a big part of OU's veteran secondary.

balls for 993 yards and 10 touchdowns in 2006. His ability to make difficult catches in traffic will generate several highlight-reel moments. Kelly's backup, sophomore Adron Tennell, will be another player to keep an eye on.

Defensively, the Sooners stand to be strongest up front and in the secondary. The loss of pass rushers C.J. Ah You, Larry Birdine and Calvin Thibodeaux at the end position is a concern, but Oklahoma coaches are excited about senior Alonzo Dotson on one side.

The secondary is bolstered by the return of seven players who started at least two games. Junior Reggie Smith, who also serves as the team's primary punt returner, is a dangerous two-way threat who can play both corner and safety. There are several other players who can play both positions, and the battles in fall camp should be intense due to the sheer depth Oklahoma has at defensive back.

Perhaps the greatest loss on the defensive side of the ball is All-American Rufus Alexander at linebacker. Junior Curtis Lofton is slated to replace him at the weakside position.

For Stoops and the Sooners, dealing with issues such as who will start at weakside linebacker means that there is a return to normalcy in Norman. After the events of 2006, that suits them just fine. ■ — By Shawn Heilbron

Junior Joey Halzle saw time in two games during mop-up situations but, with one year of junior college experience on his resume, is the most seasoned among the trio vying for the job. Redshirt freshman Sam Bradford might be the most tantalizing option. At 6-5, the native Oklahoman is a pure pocket passer with a strong arm and a quick release. The dark horse is true freshman Keith Nichol, a dual-threat quarterback from Michigan who enrolled early in order to participate in spring drills.

The receiver position features one of the Big 12's best in junior Malcolm Kelly, who hauled in 62



PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

The secondary is hands-down the best unit in the conference. Three of the four projected starters were either first- or second-team All-Big 12 selections last year. In Garrett Hartley, the Sooners have one of the nation's top kickers.

QUESTION MARKS

There are several talented, yet unproven performers at linebacker and defensive end. The same is true at quarterback, where none of the players competing for the job seized the opportunity.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

He is called King Kelly for a reason: **Malcolm Kelly** has a chance to rewrite the Oklahoma record books by the time his career is done. The junior got started last season by establishing numerous marks, including receiving yards in a quarter (134), fewest number of games to reach 1,000 receiving yards (19) and most receiving yards through two seasons (1,464).

WHAT A LOAD(HOLT)

At 6-8, 350 pounds, junior left tackle **Phil Loadholt** is one of the biggest linemen ever to play at Oklahoma. The two-time junior college All-American will have an immediate impact in protecting the blind side as the Sooners break in a new quarterback this fall.

NICE TO MEET YOU

Three of Oklahoma's first four opponents have new head coaches. The new coaches are **Todd Dodge** (North Texas), **Randy Shannon** (Miami) and **Todd Graham** (Tulsa).

2006 RECORD: 11-3 CONFERENCE FINISH: 7-1

S 2	UAB	W, 24-17
S 9	Washington	W, 37-20
S 16	@Oregon	L, 34-33
S 23	Middle Tennessee	W, 59-0
O 7	Texas (Dallas)	L, 28-10
O 14	Iowa State	W, 34-9
O 21	Colorado	W, 24-3
O 28	@Missouri	W, 26-10
N 4	@Texas A&M	W, 17-16
N 11	Texas Tech	W, 34-24
N 18	@Baylor	W, 36-10
N 25	@Oklahoma St.	W, 27-21
D 2	*Nebraska	W, 21-7
J 1	**Boise State	L, 43-42 (ot)

*Holiday Bowl, San Diego, Calif.

**Fiesta Bowl, Glendale, Ariz.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Malcolm Kelly	6-4 217 Jr.	DE	Alonzo Dotson	6-4 262 Sr.
	Adron Tennell	6-4 184 So.		Auston English	6-3 257 So.
LT	Phil Loadholt	6-8 350 Jr.	DT	DeMarcus Granger	6-3 300 So.
	Cory Brandon	6-7 295 Fr.	or	Gerald McCoy	6-4 289 Fr.
LG	George Robinson	6-5 330 Jr.	DT	Cory Bennett	6-2 278 Jr.
	Sherrone Moore	6-3 297 Sr.	or	Steven Coleman	6-4 299 Sr.
C	Jon Cooper	6-2 285 Jr.	DE	John Williams	6-5 259 Sr.
	Chase Beeler	6-3 276 So.		Auston English	6-3 257 So.
RG	Brian Simmons	6-4 293 So.	SLB	Lewis Baker	6-2 210 Sr.
	Brandon Walker	6-3 306 Jr.		Demarrio Pleasant	6-2 231 Sr.
RT	Brandon Braxton	6-6 312 Jr.	MLB	Mike Reed	6-1 250 Jr.
		6-5 321 So.	or	Ryan Reynolds	6-1 237 So.
TE	Joe Jon Finley	6-6 260 Sr.	WLB	Curtis Lofton	6-0 235 Jr.
	or	Jermaine Gresham		Brandon Crow	6-2 220 Fr.
WR	Manuel Johnson	5-11 177 Jr.	CB	Reggie Smith	6-1 197 Jr.
	Brandon Caleb	6-1 196 So.		Brett Bowers	5-11 194 So.
WR	Joaquin Iglesias	6-1 201 Jr.	SS	D.J. Wolfe	6-0 196 Sr.
	Fred Strong	6-1 197 Jr.		Keenan Clayton	6-1 210 So.
QB	Joey Halzle	6-3 208 Jr.	FS	Nic Harris	6-3 226 Jr.
	or	Sam Bradford		Darien Williams	6-0 197 Sr.
RB	Allen Patrick	6-0 191 Sr.	CB	Marcus Walker	5-11 192 Sr.
	Chris Brown	5-10 190 So.		Lundy Holmes	6-1 196 Jr.
PK	Garrett Hartley	5-9 198 Sr.	P	Michael Cohen	6-0 205 Sr.

Returning starters in bold

TEXAS LONGHORNS

Oct. 21, Austin, Texas

Entering the 2007 season, Mack Brown finds himself facing an extremely familiar predicament. The Texas head coach is looking for one of two freshmen to emerge at the quarterback position.

Backup quarterback, that is.

While the prize of last year's competition between red-shirt freshman Colt McCoy and true freshman Jevan Snead was the starting job, this spring's battle between Sherrod Harris and John Chiles is for the under-study role. Normally, second-team position battles don't garner significant attention but, after the events of last season, Brown knows how critical the backup quarterback could be to the ultimate success of his team.

As for McCoy, the past year has been nothing short of miraculous. After edging Snead for the starting job last year, McCoy demonstrated a level of poise beyond his years while becoming the first freshman quarterback in Texas history to win 10 games. He started all 13 games, threw for a record six touchdown passes in a win over Baylor and was a semifinalist for the Davey O'Brien Award. The Longhorns flourished under the leadership of McCoy, who led his team to eight straight wins after a loss to No. 1 Ohio State in the second game of the season. With Texas ranked fourth in the nation, the unthinkable happened on a blustery night in Manhattan, Kansas.

While scoring a touchdown on the Longhorns' opening drive of the game, McCoy sustained an injury to his right shoulder that kept him sidelined for the remainder of the contest. Snead came off the bench in what was his first action of the season and proceeded to complete just 13 of his 30 pass attempts in a 45-42 loss. Following that game, Brown said that he didn't want to find himself in a position where he had to rely upon a backup quarterback with no game experience. That is exactly what Brown

must contend with after Snead transferred to Ole Miss rather than potentially play second fiddle to McCoy for another three years.

With Snead out of the mix, Brown and offensive coordinator Greg Davis closely monitored the progress of both Harris and Chiles this spring. What the coaches saw were two young quarterbacks who can run. In the spring game, Harris broke loose for a 75-yard touchdown scamper, while Chiles scored on a dazzling 28-yard burst that rendered Longhorn defenders virtually defenseless. While Harris may have a slight edge based upon his being in the system for a full season, Chiles is certainly a viable candidate to get some early playing time.

"What we would like to do is get them separated and get one to play in every game and help Colt," Brown said. "Colt is the starter, period. He's done great but, so we don't have a situation come back up like Kansas State, we do need one of the other guys to get some plays in the games early next year."

Quarterback isn't the only position in the back-field where Brown sees a question mark. Jamaal Charles, who has shown flashes of brilliance during his two seasons at Texas, has also been beset by injuries that have limited his productivity. Brown is hopeful that he can give

Charles 25 to 30 touches per game; however, the junior's injury history and a lack of depth at tailback are causes for concern. The Longhorns no longer have the steady Selvin Young, who exhausted his eligibility, and Henry Melton, who was moved to defensive end at the end of last season.

Depth is not a problem at receiver, where Texas is loaded with talent. Senior Limas Sweed is primed for a monster season after snaring 12 touchdown passes, including a school-record seven-game streak with at least one scoring grab, in 2006. A certain first-round pick had he decided to make himself eligible for the NFL Draft, Sweed

Texas Sports Information



Colt McCoy had an outstanding season as a redshirted freshman, completing 68 percent of his passes for 2,570 yards.

might want to spend some time dusting off his mantel for what should be a significant haul of postseason awards.

Joining Sween in what might be the deepest receiving corps in the nation are seniors Nate Jones and Billy Pittman and juniors Quan Cosby and Jordan Shipley. That quintet will provide McCoy with ample target practice in what should be a prolific passing attack this year.

"We believe this is the best group of receivers we have ever had," Brown said. "We've got more experience with a lot of guys. Then you add Jermichael Finley to that group, and it helps us."

Finley saw extensive playing time a season ago, corraling 31 passes for 372 yards to register the best statistical output by a freshman tight end in school history. His rare blend of athleticism and speed allow him to get down the field and create mismatches. As Finley takes over as the full-time starter, he must continue to improve his blocking skills. There is little doubt, however, that he has all the tools necessary to blossom into an elite tight end.

Finley's progression as a blocker is that much more critical since the Longhorns face the task of replacing three starters who comprised the interior of the offensive line. The health of junior Cedric Dockery, who suffered a season-ending knee injury after starting the first six games of 2006 at right guard, will be closely monitored. His return to the lineup will be a welcome boost for

what will be a young unit up front.

The secondary, like the offensive line, is a source of concern as three starters from a season ago were selected in the NFL Draft, including first-round selections Michael Griffin and Aaron Ross. The lone returning starter is Griffin's twin brother, Marcus, who finished behind his sibling as the team's second-leading tackler. Senior Drew Kelson was moved from linebacker to safety this spring, returning to the position he played as a freshman. At corner, several young players such as sophomore Deon Beasley and true freshmen Curtis Brown and Ben Wells will receive opportunities to contribute early.

"The secondary has some experienced guys that have played a lot and are ready to step up, and we've got some really talented young guys who are going to challenge them," Brown said. "What we're looking at for the first time since we've been here is possibly playing two-deep in the secondary to get more young guys on the field and just let them grow up."

If Texas is to challenge for a Big 12 title and make a run at its second national title in three seasons, the Longhorns will need to rely upon youth. That is the case at many key positions, including offensive line, cornerback, tailback and quarterback, where McCoy's backup will always be one play away from potentially having to play at a critical juncture. ■ — By Shawn Heilbron



Photo: Sports Information

Wide receiver Limas Sween had touchdown catches in seven consecutive games.



PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

2nd
SOUTH DIVISION

STRENGTHS

Defensive coordinators will be scratching their heads trying to figure out how to stop the Longhorn receivers. There are so many options that double-teaming Limas Sween won't necessarily be a given. The linebacking corps is athletic and physical led by seniors Scott Derry and Robert Killebrew.

QUESTION MARKS

Mack Brown's primary concern is offensive line. Dallas Griffin is undersized at center, and the lack of depth means that Texas must get productivity from young players. Ditto for the secondary, where Drew Kelson struggled in his return to safety.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

While Colt McCoy is arguably the primary cog in the offense, the player who could have the greatest impact on a potential national title run is Jamaal Charles. Although his durability remains in question, few running backs in the country possess his nimble footwork and breakaway speed.

2006 RECORD: 10-3
CONFERENCE FINISH: 6-2

S 2	North Texas	W, 56-7
S 9	Ohio State	L, 24-7
S 16	Rice (Houston)	W, 52-7
S 23	Iowa State	W, 37-14
S 30	Sam Houston St.	W, 56-3
O 7	Oklahoma (Dallas)	W, 28-10
O 14	Baylor	W, 63-21
O 21	@Nebraska	W, 22-20
O 28	@Texas Tech	W, 35-31
N 4	Oklahoma State	W, 36-10
N 11	@Kansas State	L, 45-42
N 24	Texas A&M	L, 12-7
D 30	*Iowa	W, 26-24

*Alamo Bowl, San Antonio, Texas

SHIP SHAPE

Sidelined by injuries during his first two seasons, junior receiver Jordan Shipley is making up for lost time. The all-time leading receiver in Texas high school history, Shipley demonstrated his versatility by averaging 15.7 yards on seven rushing attempts, catching 16 passes for 229 yards and serving as the team's holder last season.

BAG OF TRICKS

Offensive coordinator Greg Davis installed several gadget plays into the Texas offense this spring in an effort to maximize the talent at the receiver position.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE Limas Sween	6-5	219	Sr.	DE Brian Orakpo	6-4	248	Jr.
Nate Jones	6-2	195	Sr.	Eddie Jones	6-3	260	Fr.
LT Tony Hills	6-6	305	Sr.	NT Derek Lokey	6-2	280	Sr.
J'Marcus Webb	6-8	310	So.	or Roy Miller	6-2	295	Jr.
LG Chris Hall	6-4	295	So.	DT Frank Okam	6-5	320	Sr.
or Cedric Dockery	6-4	320	Jr.	or Roy Miller	6-2	295	Jr.
C Dallas Griffin	6-4	285	Sr.	DE Aaron Lewis	6-4	260	Jr.
Buck Burrette	6-3	310	Fr.	or Lamarr Houston	6-2	265	So.
RG Charlie Tanner	6-4	295	So.	SLB Robert Killebrew	6-2	230	Sr.
or Cedric Dockery	6-4	320	Jr.	or Sergio Kindle	6-4	239	So.
RT Adam Ulatoski	6-8	300	So.	MLB Rashad Bobino	5-11	228	Jr.
Roy Watts	6-6	315	Fr.	Jared Norton	6-3	236	So.
TE Jermichael Finley	6-5	236	So.	WLB Scott Derry	6-3	230	Sr.
Peter Ullman	6-4	255	Jr.	or Roddrick Muckelroy	6-2	230	So.
FL Billy Pittman	6-0	200	Sr.	LCB Brandon Foster	5-9	180	Sr.
Quan Cosby	5-11	200	Jr.	or Ryan Palmer	5-10	190	Jr.
QB Colt McCoy	6-3	205	So.	SS Erick Jackson	6-2	200	Sr.
Sherrod Harris	6-3	219	Fr.	or Robert Joseph	6-2	195	So.
TB Jamaal Charles	6-1	200	Jr.	FS Marcus Griffin	6-0	202	Sr.
Chris Ogbonnaya	6-1	225	Jr.	or Drew Kelson	6-2	215	Sr.
FB Luke Tiemann	6-2	235	Jr.	RCB Deon Beasley	5-10	170	So.
or Antwan Cobb	6-0	215	Fr.	or Chykie Brown	6-1	180	Fr.
PK Ryan Bailey	6-2	195	Jr.	P Trevor Garland	6-2	190	So.

Returning starters in bold

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Oct. 20, Lincoln

Trailing Texas 7-6 early in the fourth quarter last November, Texas A&M quarterback Stephen McGee entered the Aggies' huddle and delivered the following message: It's gut-check time.

Sixteen plays later, McGee finished off the impressive drive with an 8-yard touchdown that gave the Aggies their signature victory of 2006 — and the Dennis Franchione era. Along the way, A&M converted five third-down opportunities, took nearly nine minutes off the clock and displayed an imposing will that had not been seen by Aggie fans in years.

From A&M's perspective, it was intestinal fortitude at its finest, with the exhausted McGee spilling his guts in willing the Aggies to their first win in Austin since 1994. The gritty quarterback vomited during the drive and took one crushing shot after another.

If it wasn't already, the Aggies officially became McGee's team on that day, taking on the quarterback's mentality and never-say-die toughness.

Like that day in Austin, McGee has something to say as he looks toward the 2007 season. His message: It's closing time.

The Aggies finished off the Longhorns last year and won nine games, but they failed to seal the deal in three conference battles, losing to Oklahoma and Nebraska by one point and falling to Texas Tech by four. Those six points cost A&M a chance to play for a conference championship. McGee spent the offseason making sure that every teammate is focused on finishing games in '07.

A&M, with a loaded offense and an improving defense, possesses the talent to be in every game. But according to McGee, the Aggies must develop a knockout punch to avoid further gut shots.

"We were close last year (to winning the Big 12 South), but close isn't good enough," McGee said. "We have to

develop a tougher mental edge at the end of games so that we can find that one point or those 30 seconds that make the difference in winning a close game or losing. The talent is here to win the Big 12 title; now we have to prove that we have toughness to close things out."

If there is a sense of urgency in McGee's tone, it probably has to do with the realization that he will never again be associated with a collegiate offensive line as talented and experienced as this year's unit. Senior center Cody

Wallace and senior guard Kirk Elder return after earning first-team All-Big 12 honors. They are joined by a pair of physical veterans in junior Yemi Babalola and senior Corey Clark. The most likely fifth starter, senior Chris Yoder, has seen action in 29 games.

Quite simply, this is a potentially dominant offensive front. And as a result, McGee believes he can be an even more effective passer than last year when he completed 62 percent of his passes for 2,295 yards and 12 touchdowns. McGee, who threw just two interceptions in 313 attempts, also believes that the balanced attack will create nightmares for opponents.

"It's a pick your poison kind of deal, because if you force us to throw, we'll do just that," he said. "But with our running backs and our offensive front, we can also beat

teams by grinding it out on the ground."

Prior to the Texas game, A&M was the only team in the nation still averaging 200 yards passing and 200 rushing per game. McGee should continue to improve his passing skills, as senior wideout Earvin Taylor returns to join one of the best tight end tandems in the country in Martellus Bennett and Joey Thomas.

But it's the running game that should truly strike fear into opposing defenses. Powerful Jorvorskie Lane is virtually unstoppable in short-yardage situations. The 275-

Scott Bruhn



Junior quarterback Stephen McGee completed 62 percent of his passes for 2,295 yards and had just two interceptions.

pounder produced either a first down or a touchdown 26 times on 29 third-down or fourth-down carries last year. Meanwhile, Mike Goodson was the Big 12 Freshman of the Year, rushing for 847 yards and four touchdowns.

Defensively, the secondary was the primary concern entering last season after the Aggies finished dead last nationally (117th) in pass defense in 2005. The '06 Aggies were dramatically improved against the pass (44th nationally), and with almost everyone back, the improvements should continue.

A&M lost emotional leader Melvin Bullitt, but Japhus Brown, Danny Gorrer and Devin Gregg are proven performers, while sophomore cornerback Jordan Peterson and sophomore Jordan Pugh, who moved from cornerback to safety, appear to have star potential.

The concerns regarding the linebacker situation last year were also alleviated by the emergence of junior college transfers Mark Dodge and Misi Tupe. Both players are now seniors after solid debut seasons — Dodge produced 51 tackles and became a big-play specialist, while Tupe (54 tackles) earned Big 12 Defensive Newcomer of the Year honors.

Up front, the Aggies look extremely impressive. Senior end Chris Harrington is to the defense what McGee is to the offense — a fiery, hard-nosed leader. Despite battling injuries last season, Harrington led the team in tackles for losses (11.5) and sacks (7.5). Tackles Red Bryant and Kellen Heard are monsters inside, while former reserves Cyril Obiozor, Michael Bennett and Henry Smith add tremendous depth and flexibility.

The veteran roster gives Franchione reason to believe that the Aggies can handle a potentially brutal road schedule. The Aggies went unbeaten on the road last year, but duplicating that feat will be a very tall task.

A&M plays at Miami in the nonconference and then faces Texas Tech, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri on the road in conference play. Since the inception of the Big 12 in 1996, A&M has played 15 road games against Texas Tech, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri, compiling a 2-13 record in those road trips.

"There's a comfort level with our road schedule in knowing that we have a lot of young men who have been in hostile environments before," Franchione said. "I don't think we will be uncomfortable going on the road."

They better not be. This is Franchione's fifth season at A&M, and it is undeniably his most talented and experienced team since he arrived in Aggieland.

This team possesses the talent to contend for a Big 12 title. Now, the Aggies — as McGee points out — must prove they can finish games and finish at the top of the South Division standings. ■ — By Rusty Burson



Returning All-Big 12 center
Cody Wallace enters his third
season as a starter.

Senior end Chris Harrington is to the defense what McGee is to the offense — a fiery, hard-nosed leader. Despite battling injuries last season, Harrington led the team in tackles for losses (11.5) and sacks (7.5). Tackles Red Bryant and Kellen Heard are monsters inside, while former reserves Cyril Obiozor, Michael Bennett and Henry Smith add tremendous depth and flexibility.

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This team possesses the talent to contend for a Big 12 title. Now, the Aggies — as McGee points out — must prove they can finish games and finish at the top of the South Division standings. ■ — By Rusty Burson



AT A GLANCE

3rd
SOUTH DIVISION

PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

With a diverse and deep running game, the Aggies can eat up a clock like few teams in the country (the Aggies led the nation in time of possession last year). The offense is so balanced that it will give any opponent fits, and the combination of **Jorvorskie Lane** and **Mike Goodson** can kill you slowly or quickly. The Aggies also do a tremendous job in protecting the football, and A&M's defense showed dramatic improvements last season under **Gary Darnell**.

QUESTION MARKS

A&M is a more talented and deeper team than the one that went to the Holiday Bowl last season, but the brutal road schedule this year could make it difficult to improve on the nine wins last year.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

In addition to all the intangibles that junior quarterback **Stephen McGee** brings to the team, he's also remarkably productive. McGee was the first quarterback in the nation to surpass 2,000 passing yards and 500 rushing yards last season. His ability to protect the football, even while running the option, was one of the keys to A&M's nine wins last year. A&M lost just 13 turnovers last year, which ranked No. 2 nationally.

2006 RECORD: 9-4
CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

S 2	The Citadel	W, 35-3
S 9	Louisiana-Lafayette	W, 51-7
S 16	Army (San Antonio)	W, 28-24
S 23	Louisiana Tech	W, 45-14
S 30	Texas Tech	L, 31-27
O 7	@Kansas	W, 21-18
O 14	Missouri	W, 25-19
O 21	@Oklahoma State	W, 34-33
O 28	@Baylor	W, 31-21
N 4	Oklahoma	L, 17-16
N 11	Nebraska	L, 28-27
N 24	@Texas	W, 12-7
D 28	*California	L, 45-10

*Holiday Bowl, San Diego, Calif.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR2	Pierre Brown	6-2	200	Jr.	DE	Chris Harrington	6-5	265	Sr.
	Terrence McCoy	6-4	206	Fr.		Amos Gbunblee	6-5	250	Jr.
OT	Yemi Babalola	6-4	308	Jr.	DT	Red Bryant	6-5	324	Sr.
	Travis Schneider	6-8	297	Jr.		Chris Smith	6-4	260	Jr.
OG	Kirk Elder	6-5	307	Sr.	NT	Henry Smith	6-3	307	Sr.
	Lee Grimes	6-6	325	So.		Kellen Heard	6-6	330	So.
C	Cody Wallace	6-4	294	Sr.	DE	Cyril Obiozor	6-5	257	Jr.
	Kevin Matthews	6-4	302	So.		Michael Bennett	6-4	265	Jr.
SG	Chris Yoder	6-3	303	Sr.	SLB	Mark Dodge	6-2	222	Sr.
	Michael Shumard	6-5	307	So.		Matt Featherston	6-2	243	So.
ST	Corey Clark	6-6	309	Sr.	MLB	Misi Tupe	5-10	253	Sr.
	Robbie Frost	6-6	305	So.		Anthony Lewis	6-2	249	So.
TE	Martellus Bennett	6-7	253	Jr.	WH	Jordan Pugh	6-0	190	So.
	Joey Thomas	6-5	250	Sr.		Kenny Brown	6-2	207	Fr.
WRX	Kerry Franks	5-11	196	Sr.	CB	Danny Gorrer	6-0	181	Jr.
	Howard Morrow	6-0	211	Jr.		Arkeith Brown	6-0	177	Jr.
QB	Stephen McGee	6-3	215	Jr.	FS	Devin Gregg	6-0	196	Jr.
	Jerrod Johnson	6-6	223	Fr.		DeMaurier Thompson	6-1	185	Fr.
TB	Jorvorskie Lane	6-0	263	Jr.	SS	Alton Dixon	5-11	207	Jr.
	Mike Goodson	6-0	197	So.		Chevar Bryson	6-0	186	So.
FB	Chris Alexander	5-11	248	Sr.	CB	Jordan Peterson	5-10	188	So.
	Jodie Richardson	6-0	237	So.		Marquis Carpenter	6-0	179	Sr.
PK	Matt Szymanski	6-1	193	So.	P	Justin Brantly	6-4	233	Jr.

Returning starters in bold

OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS

Oct. 13, Lincoln

From Bobby Reid's development to Boone Pickens' dollars, the Cowboys are riding a wave of momentum that was steadily building during Mike Gundy's first two seasons.

Now in season three under Gundy, OSU may be poised to jump to a new, bigger wave.

Last year's team experienced growth pains in finishing 7-6 (3-5 in Big 12 play), capped by a historic victory over Alabama in the Independence Bowl. Four of those losses weren't decided until the final play of the game.

In 2007, with eight starters back on offense, seven on defense and every key contributor on special teams, Gundy sees a more experienced squad that is far better equipped to finish things.

"This year we have to be a tougher team," Gundy said. "We will need to be a mentally tougher team to be successful at some of the places we have to play next fall."

Eight opponents played in a bowl game last year, and five of those — including the season-opener at Georgia — are on the road.

So, it appears, the time is now to find that bigger, faster wave.

Start with Reid.

This will be his third year as the Cowboys' starting QB, and, after a difficult 2005, Reid last season finally hit that level of potential everyone predicted from him when he signed with the Cowboys out of high school. He rushed for 500 yards, passed for 2,266 yards and combined for 29 touchdowns.

Then, look at Pickens.

The Texas oil tycoon and OSU graduate last year gave a gift that, thanks to savvy investing, keeps on giving. The Pickens Stadium expansion is nearly complete, giving OSU an arena rivaling most in the Big 12. And, with donations from others now flooding in, Oklahoma State's forthcoming "athletic village" — a collection of indoor

and outdoor facilities for several sports, including football — will finally put OSU in the same recruiting arena with the Big 12's traditional powers.

And consider the growth curve of last year's team.

Wide receiver Adarius Bowman caught 60 passes for 1,181 yards and 12 touchdowns. The 6-foot-4, 220-pound senior, in his first season after transferring from North Carolina, emerged as the Big 12's most dangerous play-maker.

Running back Dantrell Savage rushed for 820 yards and eight touchdowns on just 126 carries (6.5 per carry). The 5-9, 195-pound senior, who missed most of the first half of the season with an injury, was MVP of the Independence Bowl. Keith Toston rushed for 631 (6.0) yards and six TDs. The 6-1, 210-pound sophomore scored twice in the Independence Bowl and gives OSU one of college football's most exciting rushing tandems.

The offensive line returns four players who started last year, including guard David Koenig (27 consecutive starts) and center David Washington (24).

Tight end is now a strength, with downfield threat Brandon Pettigrew (24 catches, 310 yards) and blocking specialists Paschal Smith and Justin Waller back.

Oklahoma State's defense showed marked improvement last season, but there is plenty of room for more. Still, last year's youth at defensive back and linebacker will be served this fall.

Linebacker may be an embarrassment of riches for the Cowboys. Six players who started last fall are back, including two freshmen All-Americans (Patrick Lavine and Chris Collins) and the Independence Bowl defensive MVP (Jeremy Nethon).

Senior Donovan Woods (a former QB and four-year starter) spent the spring converting to a linebacker-safety hybrid for new defensive coordinator Tim Beckman. And

Oklahoma State Sports Information



Wide receiver Adarius Bowman quickly emerged as one of the Big 12's top receivers with 60 catches for 1,181 yards.

safety Andre Sexton, who also was named Freshman All-American, led the Cowboys with 79 tackles in 2006.

Both corners return, as well. Jacob Lacey and Martel Van Zant have tons of experience, but have to show they can defend the pass better: OSU's pass defense (217 yards per game) ranked 84th nationally.

And on special teams, almost all the crew is back. That includes kicker Jason Ricks (10-of-12 on field goals, 47-of-49 on PATs), second-team All-American punter Matt Fodge (44.9-yard average) and freshman All-American return man Perrish Cox.



Oklahoma State Sports Information

Running back Dantrell Savage averaged 6.5 yards per carry and scored eight touchdowns.

be found to go with Bowman. Sophomore Artrell Woods had a spectacular spring, especially early when Bowman was with the OSU basketball team. Senior Tommy Devereaux may finally be ready for a breakout season.

Despite Reid's success last season, there remains one question Cowboy fans want answered perhaps more than any other: Is the position settled?

Gundy and offensive coordinator Larry Fedora devised a scheme that still utilized Reid and took advantage of Zac Robinson's talents. In spot duty, Robinson rushed for 144 yards and passed for 345. At times, he was the QB and Reid flanked out at receiver. In fact, on the game's final series against Oklahoma, with the outcome still undecided (OU won 27-21), Reid was on the sideline, and Robinson was throwing into the end zone.

Gundy downplayed any possibility of a quarterback controversy but clarified during the spring that Robinson — who played the second half and threw three TDs against Texas A&M when Reid went out with a concussion — will still get a handful of series each week. In one spring scrimmage, Reid handed off to Robinson, who dropped back to throw. Once Robinson even took a hand-off off tackle and had Reid trailing as a pitch option.

Fedora and Reid both pointed out that Florida won the '06 national championship last season with a two-quarterback system. "It's difficult to guard two quarterbacks," Reid said, "especially when both guys can run and throw." ■ — By John E. Hoover

The Cowboys, however, must spend their training camp addressing a handful of primary personnel concerns.

The entire starting defensive line has departed. But senior ends Nathan Peterson and Marque Fountain have combined to play in 66 games and have 23 sacks between them. Jeray Chatham is the only experienced defensive tackle on the team, and he spent 13 games last year as a backup. Junior college transfer Tonga Tea, who enrolled early and participated in spring practice, will have to contribute early and often.

And on offense, a complementary receiver must

be found to go with Bowman. Sophomore Artrell Woods had a spectacular spring, especially early when Bowman was with the OSU basketball team. Senior Tommy Devereaux may finally be ready for a breakout season.

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Fedora and Reid both pointed out that Florida won the '06 national championship last season with a two-quarterback system. "It's difficult to guard two quarterbacks," Reid said, "especially when both guys can run and throw." ■ — By John E. Hoover



PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

Offense. Senior wide receiver **Adarius Bowman**, who averaged 19.7 yards per catch, might have been a high draft choice but opted to come back. Junior quarterback **Bobby Reid** ranked 16th nationally in passing efficiency, and running backs **Dantrell Savage** and **Keith Toston** are big-play threats.

QUESTION MARKS

The defense loses all four starting linemen. A replacement must be found for four-year starting wide receiver **D'Juan Woods**, who ranks third in OSU history in catches, yards and touchdowns. **Zac Robinson** was effective as a backup and spot replacement for Reid. Will he continue in that role, or does Reid now have a short leash?

2006 RECORD: 7-6

CONFERENCE FINISH: 3-5

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Bowman was the Big 12's best wide receiver last season. After sitting out 2005 as a transfer from North Carolina, Bowman replaced Woods as the top threat. He caught 60 passes for 1,181 yards and 12 TDs. He set a Big 12 record with 300 receiving yards against Kansas.

*Independence Bowl, Shreveport, La.

BUCKEYE INFLUENCE

OSU's new defensive coordinator is **Tim Beckman**, who coached Ohio State's cornerbacks in the national championship game in January and moved to Stillwater in February.

BALANCE ON OFFENSE

The Cowboys' offense last season not only was dangerous but also remarkably balanced, averaging 201.8 yards passing and 208 yards rushing.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Tommy Devereaux	6-0	185	Sr.	DE	Marque Fountain	6-2	260	Sr.
	Artrell Woods	6-1	185	Sr.		Derek Burton	6-5	265	So.
LT	Russell Okung	6-5	290	So.	NT	Jeray Chatham	6-3	280	Jr.
	Brady Bond	6-6	290	So.		Tonga Tea	6-0	320	Jr.
LG	Andrew Lewis	6-5	295	So.	DT	Maurice Cummings	6-4	265	Sr.
	Michael Booker	6-3	310	Fr.		Jonathan Lewis	6-2	290	So.
C	David Washington	6-3	295	Jr.	DE	Nathan Peterson	6-2	240	Sr.
	Andrew Lawrence	6-4	305	So.		Shane Jarka	6-4	260	Fr.
RG	Steve Denning	6-5	300	Jr.	OLB	Chris Collins	6-2	240	So.
	Noah Franklin	6-5	310	So.		Jeremy Nethon	6-0	225	Sr.
RT	David Koenig	6-5	290	Sr.	MLB	Rodrick Johnson	6-3	250	So.
	Jacob Secret	6-5	295	Fr.		Marcus Brown	6-2	240	Jr.
TE	Brandon Pettigrew	6-6	260	Jr.	OLB	Patrick Lavine	6-3	220	So.
	Justin Waller	6-4	240	Jr.		Alex Odjari	6-0	240	Jr.
WR	Adarius Bowman	6-4	220	Sr.	CB	Jacob Lacey	5-11	175	Jr.
	Seth Newton	6-3	195	Jr.		Perrish Cox	6-1	185	So.
QB	Bobby Reid	6-3	235	Jr.	FS	Donovan Woods	6-2	225	So.
	Zac Robinson	6-3	205	So.		Quenton Moore	5-11	185	Jr.
RB	Dantrell Savage	5-9	195	Sr.	SS	Andre Sexton	6-1	210	So.
	Keith Toston	6-1	210	So.		Clint Coe	6-2	195	Sr.
FB	John Johnson	6-1	255	Jr.	CB	Martel Van Zant	6-1	210	Sr.
	Jeremiah Burton	6-1	250	Jr.		T.J. Bell	6-0	185	Jr.
PK	Jason Ricks	6-2	200	Jr.	P	Matt Fodge	6-1	195	Jr.

Returning starters in bold

TEXAS TECH RED RAIDERS

If Texas Tech picks up where it left off at the end of the 2006 season, a simple warning should be issued to all of its opponents:

Look out.

After recording the greatest comeback in bowl history, the Red Raiders come charging into the fall with a returning starter at quarterback for the first time since 2002. That would be Graham Harrell who, like Kliff Kingsbury, B.J. Symons, Sonny Cumbie and Cody Hodges before him, led the Big 12 in passing yards (4,555), touchdown passes (38) and total offense (345.3 yards per game). He also engineered the historic rally against Minnesota in the Insight Bowl that helped wipe away a 31-point deficit late in the third quarter. The Red Raiders went on to prevail in overtime, 44-41, ultimately costing Golden Gopher head coach Glen Mason his job.

What do the Red Raiders do for an encore in 2007? With Mike Leach, anything is possible.

The eighth-year head coach showed his unpredictability by hinting this spring that talented red-shirt freshman Taylor Potts was pushing Harrell for the starting job. Of course, with Leach it was likely a ploy to further motivate the highly competitive junior.

"I think it's really going to be key what Graham and Taylor both do between now and camp," Leach said.

"Early on it wasn't close enough, which may be good for Graham. Ultimately, I don't think it's good for Graham because all people improve the most in a competitive situation."

As long as Leach is running the show — both on and off the field — Texas Tech will be a fun team to watch.

It wasn't always fun for the Red Raiders last season. An uncharacteristically low-scoring effort in a 12-3 loss at TCU was followed three weeks later by consecutive losses to Missouri and Colorado. What made the Colorado

loss so stunning was that it marked the first time since 1999 that Texas Tech was held scoreless through three quarters.

For the first time in recent memory it appeared that Texas Tech was having a difficult time revving up its offensive engine early in games. The bowl game was another example of that.

This season, Leach wants to see his team start the same way that it finishes. That means full-throttle, pedal-to-the-metal offense for 60 minutes.

With a year running the offense under his belt and, assuming he remains the starter, the full confidence of his coaches and teammates, Harrell could threaten Symons' NCAA single-season record of 5,833 passing yards. If he is to make a run at that mark, he will do so without the services of his top two targets from a season ago. Joel Filani and Robert Johnson combined for 180 catches, 2,171 yards and 24 touchdowns, but the Red Raiders have high expectations for their replacements.

Redshirt freshman Michael Crabtree, a big target at 6-2 and one of the spring's top performers, will battle sophomore Edward Britton for Filani's spot on the outside. At inside receiver, senior Grant Walker is the frontrunner, while his younger brother, Todd, will battle

for a starting job at the outside "X" receiver position. The lone returning starter at receiver is multi-talented senior Danny Amendola, who has also been the team's leading punt returner in each of his three seasons.

Last season, Tech wondered who would replace four-year starter Taurean Henderson at running back. Shannon Woods answered that question by posting 1,808 all-purpose yards, the most by a Red Raider since 2002. The junior's 926 yards on the ground represented the highest single-season total since Leach took over in 2000.

Texas Tech Sports Information



Graham Harrell led the Big 12 in passing yards (4,555), touchdown passes (38) and total offense.

There is no shortage of speed on the offensive side of the ball. The same can be said about the defense. "I think we're faster," Leach said when asked about his defense. "We have some young guys that I'm impressed with."

Several young players will get an opportunity to further impress Leach this fall. Six defensive starters were lost, which opens the door for a host of sophomores such as Rajon Henley, Richard Jones and Brandon Williams on the defensive line and Jamar Wall at cornerback. Henley had an excellent spring and is projected to start next to Jones on the interior. On the outside, Williams will step into the vacancy created by Keyunta Dawson, who completed his career fourth on the school's all-time sacks list.

The most experienced group is the secondary, which has three of its four starters back from a unit that led the Big 12 in pass defense a year ago. Heading the group is senior strong safety Joe Garcia, a punishing hitter who is the team's leading returning tackler.

"I thought the most impressive unit of the spring game was our secondary," Leach said. "Joe Garcia, I think, has put a roof over things and leads the defense well."

Joining Garcia in the defensive backfield are senior cornerback Chris Parker, junior free safety Darcel McBath and Wall. A long jumper on Texas Tech's track team, Wall is an extremely athletic cover corner who played in 11 games as a true freshman last season.

Only one full-time starter, sixth-year senior Kellen Tillman, returns at linebacker. Seniors Chad

Danny Amendola, Tech's only returning starter at receiver, is also a threat as a punt returner.

Hill and Paul Williams are experienced veterans who are expected to step into starting roles. Hill may have to fight off sophomore Marlon Williams for the weakside spot.

Senior kicker Alex Trlica won't have to fight anyone off, as he has solidified the kicking game for the Red Raiders. The NCAA career standard-bearer for extra points made without a miss at 166, Trlica put the exclamation point on the dramatic comeback in the Insight Bowl against Minnesota. His career-best 52-yard field goal as time expired sent the game into overtime and allowed Texas Tech to make history.

When the subject is Texas Tech, history-making is never beyond the realm of possibility. With a coach who is so offensive-minded that he often refers to his own defense as "they" and a roster full of game-breakers, there could be more history in the works this fall. If the defense can merely hold teams at bay and the offense can avoid empty drives early in games, the Red Raiders should be a very dangerous team in 2007.

When Texas Tech opens the season on Sept. 3 in Dallas against SMU, the Mustangs will be the first team to find out whether momentum can indeed survive an entire off-season. ■ — By Shawn Heilbron



Team Tech Sports Information



PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

With Graham Harrell returning, the passing game should be flammable. Texas Tech is the only program that can lose starting receivers and actually be better at the position the following year. On defense, the secondary is stout.

QUESTION MARKS

With four new starters on the offensive line, there will be a learning curve that Texas Tech really can't afford. A playmaker at linebacker is sorely needed following the graduation of Brock Stratton.

2006 RECORD: 8-5 CONFERENCE FINISH: 4-4

S 2	SMU	W, 35-3
S 9	@UTEP	W, 38-35 (ot)
S 16	@TCU	L, 12-3
S 23	SE Louisiana	W, 62-0
S 30	@Texas A&M	W, 31-27
O 7	Missouri	L, 38-21
O 14	@Colorado	L, 30-6
O 21	@Iowa State	W, 42-26
O 28	Texas	L, 35-31
N 4	Baylor	W, 55-21
N 11	@Oklahoma	L, 34-24
N 18	Oklahoma State	W, 30-24
D 29	*Minnesota	W, 44-41 (ot)

*Insight Bowl, Tempe, Ariz.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

At 5-11, 177 pounds, **Danny Amendola** may not cast the largest shadow on the field, but he can certainly make the greatest impact. Whether returning kicks or catching passes, he is a threat to score any time he touches the ball. He is considered a clone of former Red Raider and current New England receiver **Wes Welker**.

THREE FOR THREE

Last season was the third straight that Texas Tech owned the top three individual spots on the Big 12 receptions list (**Joel Filani** — 91, **Robert Johnson** — 89, **Shannon Woods** — 75). The Red Raiders will aim this year to repeat their efforts of 2005, when they owned the top four targets in the league (**Taurean Henderson** — 67, **Johnson** — 67, **Filani** — 65, **Hicks** — 65).

AA-OK

In three games against Division I-AA opponents over the last two seasons, Texas Tech has won by a combined score of 205-28.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WRX L.A. Reed	6-2	201	Jr.	LE Jake Ratliff	6-6	238	Jr.
Edward Britton	6-1	173	So.	Tyler Yenzer	6-5	237	Sr.
LT Marlon Winn	6-5	329	So.	NT Rajon Henley	6-3	279	So.
Chris Olson	6-5	299	Fr.	Brian Jones	6-0	294	So.
LG Louis Vasquez	6-6	351	Jr.	DT Richard Jones	6-1	293	So.
Chris Olson	6-5	299	Fr.	Clint Stoffels	6-0	251	Fr.
C Shawn Byrnes	6-3	303	So.	RE Brendon Williams	6-4	244	So.
Justin Keown	6-4	280	Fr.	or	6-5	237	Sr.
RG Stephen Hamby	6-3	290	Jr.	SLB Kellen Tillman	6-1	241	Sr.
Brandon Carter	6-6	356	So.	Ty Linder	6-2	210	St.
RT Rylan Reed	6-7	290	Jr.	MLB Paul Williams	6-1	219	Sr.
Andrew Johnson	6-4	308	So.	Victor Hunter	5-10	258	So.
Y Danny Amendola	5-11	181	Sr.	WLB Chad Hill	6-1	220	Sr.
Grant Walker	6-0	187	Sr.	Marlon Williams	6-0	211	So.
H Eric Morris	5-8	171	Jr.	LCB Jamar Wall	5-11	199	So.
Kelly Hildebrandt	5-9	174	Sr.	De'Shon Sanders	6-1	184	Jr.
WRZ Michael Crabtree	6-3	222	Fr.	SS Joe Garcia	6-2	215	Sr.
Lyle Leong	6-0	168	Fr.	Lance Fuller	6-1	216	Jr.
QB Graham Harrell	6-2	196	Jr.	FS Darcel McBath	6-1	201	Jr.
Taylor Potts	6-4	219	Fr.	Anthony Hines	6-2	216	Jr.
RB Kobey Lewis	5-6	173	So.	RCB Chris Parker	5-11	177	Sr.
Shannon Woods	5-11	195	Jr.	Marcus Bunton	5-8	192	Jr.
PK Alex Trlica	5-11	171	Sr.	P Grant Berg	6-5	201	Jr.

Returning starters in bold

BAYLOR BEARS

When Guy Morriss accepted the head coaching job at Baylor in December of 2002, he knew that it would take time to resurrect a program that had fallen on hard times. Entering his fifth season in Waco, Morriss has quietly transformed Baylor from perennial conference doormat to legitimate bowl contender. With three Big 12 wins last season, Baylor set a school record and equaled the number of conference wins it had accumulated in the six years prior to Morriss' arrival.

Morriss has addressed a number of the requisites needed to turn the program around. Inroads have been made with the state's high school coaches and recruiting efforts are as good as they have been since Baylor joined the Big 12. Additionally, plans are in place for a \$34 million complex that will significantly enhance football facilities and operations. With a solid foundation in place, Morriss knows that in order for his program to take the next step, it must address the issue of consistency. If the Bears hope to contend for their first bowl bid since 1994, they must eliminate blowout losses. Since 2003, Baylor has lost nine games in which it allowed 50 or more points. With seven starters returning from a defense that yielded 32.6 points and 408.2 yards per game, there is nowhere to go but up.

Following Bill Bradley's departure to coach the secondary for the San Diego Chargers, Larry Hoefer was promoted to defensive coordinator after spending the past four seasons coaching Baylor's safeties. A 33-year veteran in the coaching ranks, Hoefer drew immediate praise from Morriss for his work during the spring.

"I wasn't surprised, but I was real pleased at the way the kids responded to Coach Hoefer," Morriss said. "He's a little more hands-on than Bill. We had a really good

spring defensively and that, of course, is good to see because that's where you win football games."

If Baylor hopes to win more football games this season, Hoefer will have to figure out a way to achieve greater balance on defense. Despite the fact that the Bears ranked second in the Big 12 with 16 interceptions, they only mustered a league-worst 11 sacks. They also were the league's worst unit against the run by allowing 191 yards per contest. One player who will help Baylor improve its deficiencies is sophomore linebacker Joe Pawelek.

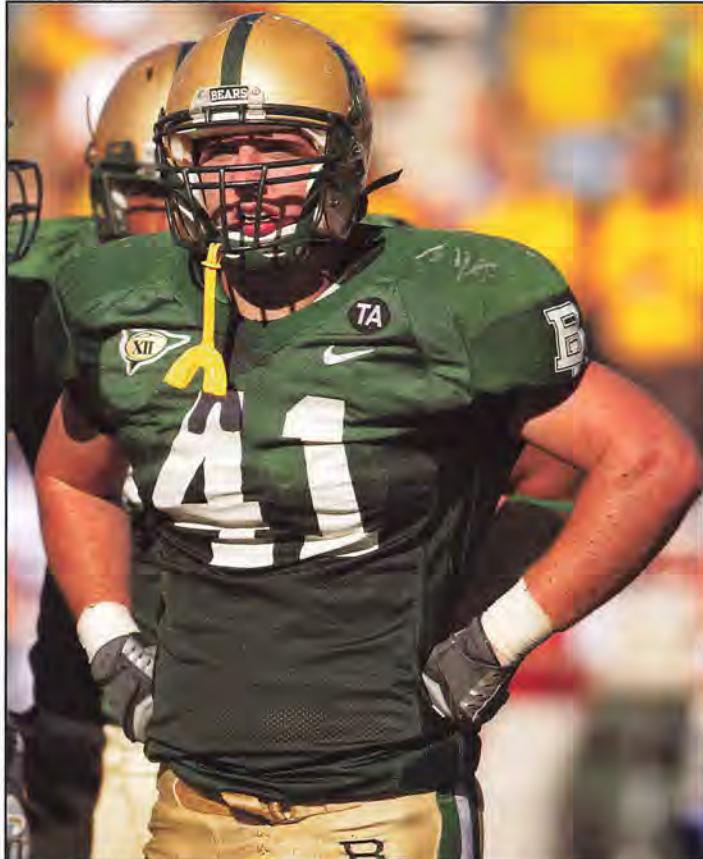
As a freshman, Pawelek led the team with 86 tackles and nine quarterback hurries on his way to earning Big 12 Defensive Newcomer of the Year honors. He is a physical player who should continue to thrive in Baylor's 4-2-5 defensive scheme.

Another player with the potential to have a big season is junior rover Dwain Crawford. A 10-game starter at free safety in 2006, Crawford played a pivotal role in each of his team's three conference wins. He amassed a career-best 11 tackles in an overtime victory over Colorado, registered 10 tackles and picked off a pass in the late stages of the Kansas game and recorded five tackles, two interceptions and a pass breakup against Kansas State.

Crawford will be joined in the defensive backfield by a pair of new starters at corner. Seniors Josh Bell and Alton Widemon can count on being tested against the Big 12 South's prolific passing teams such as Texas and Texas Tech.

Speaking of prolific passing teams, Baylor deserves to be included in that conversation as well. The installation of a new spread passing attack last season proved to be successful as the Bears generated the Big 12's third-best passing attack at 275 yards per game. With the graduation of quarterback Shawn Bell, the question of who would be

Chris Anderson/Baylor University Media Relations



Middle linebacker Joe Pawelek led the Bears with 86 tackles and was named Big 12 Defensive Newcomer of the Year.

his successor was a major storyline during the spring. With five quarterbacks competing for the job, Morriss acknowledged that the front-runner heading into the fall is Michael Machen, a senior transfer from Kent State.

"It's his job to lose, but he understands that he's got some work to do this summer as well," Morriss said. "I like him because of his age and maturity. He doesn't get rattled too much, and I think that's good at this particular position."

Machen outplayed sophomore Blake Szymanski, who started the final three games of 2006 after Bell went down with a season-ending knee injury against Texas A&M. At 6-6, Machen gives Baylor a commanding presence in the pocket. Another signal-caller to keep an eye on is junior college transfer John David Weed, who could push

Machen and Szymanski for playing time.

Whoever ultimately wins the job will be working with a revamped crop of receivers. Six of last season's top 10 pass-catchers graduated, leaving a relatively inexperienced group to carry the load.

While the Bears generated significant numbers throwing the ball, the running game was anemic. Teams that employ the spread offense will never yield stellar rushing totals, but Baylor ranked dead last among NCAA Division I-A teams at just over 40 yards per game. With no place to go

but up, Morriss placed a greater emphasis during spring practice on running the football.

"It was an area we felt like we had to improve in to be successful, obviously," Morriss said. "We were last in the NCAA rushing the football, and we just made more of a commitment to work on it in practice."

Senior running back Brandon Whittaker takes over as the full-time starter and gives the Bears an added dimension because of his receiving skills. Baylor's top returning receiver, Whittaker has tremendous speed and excellent hands as evidenced by his streak of 221 consecutive touches without a fumble.

For most teams, replacing a punter is not a major concern. When your punter was Daniel Sepulveda, the only two-time winner of the Ray Guy Award and a consensus All-American who led the nation by averaging 46.5 yards per boot last season, it is easy to understand why filling his spot is an issue. Junior Caleb Allen faces the daunting task of not only replacing Sepulveda but also handling the place-kicking chores. Allen will be challenged at both punter and kicker this fall by incoming freshmen Derek Epperson and Shea Brewster, respectively.

There is no question that the Bears have made progress since Morriss took over. It is doubtful, however, that they have the talent to take a giant stride forward and compete with the giants of the Big 12. ■ — By Shawn Heilbron



Chris Anderson/Baylor University Media Relations

Senior Brandon Whitaker takes over as the full-time starter at running back.

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PROJECTED 2007 FINISH:

STRENGTHS

Linebackers Nick Moore and Joe Pawelek are rock solid. They don't make many mistakes and won't be outworked by anyone. Three of Baylor's four returning starters on offense are on the line.

6th
SOUTH DIVISION

QUESTION MARKS

Opening the season with new starters at corner is always a concern. Finding a go-to receiver is another one. Questions also abound in the kicking game.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Offensive coordinator Lee Hays is a disciple of Texas Tech head coach Mike Leach. That means that if Michael Machen is as good as his coaches believe that he is, Baylor might score enough points to win a few games in which the defense allows 50 points.

2006 RECORD: 4-8 CONFERENCE FINISH: 3-5

S 3	TCU	L, 17-7
S 9	Northwestern St.	W, 47-10
S 16	@Washington St.	L, 17-15
S 23	Army	L, 27-20
S 30	Kansas State	W, 17-3
O 7	@Colorado	W, 34-31
O 14	@Texas	L, 63-31
O 21	Kansas	W, 36-35
O 28	Texas A&M	L, 31-21
N 4	@Texas Tech	L, 55-21
N 11	@Oklahoma State	L, 66-24
N 18	Oklahoma	L, 36-10

ONE AT A TIME

The Bears may be hard-pressed to continue a trend that has seen them improve upon their Big 12 win total in each of the past three seasons. They went from one win in 2004 to two in 2005 before last year's record three victories.

GOOD GENES

A pair of incoming freshmen with familiar surnames decided to follow in their fathers' footsteps by playing at Baylor. Athlete V.J. McElroy, whose father Vann was an All-American safety before starring for the Oakland Raiders, and defensive end Matt Singletary, the son of College and Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker, Mike.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WRX Thomas White	6-2 206 Jr.	LE Jason Lamb	6-6 253 So.
David Gettis	6-4 206 So.	Adam Geib	6-5 250 Jr.
LT Jason Smith	6-5 288 Jr.	T Vincent Rhodes	6-2 302 Jr.
Chris Griesbeck	6-3 267 So.	Damien Taylor	6-3 271 So.
LG Dan Gay	6-5 311 Jr.	NT Trey Bryant	6-3 310 So.
Sam Sledge	6-2 270 So.	Connor Redfearn	6-2 287 Sr.
C J.D.Walton	6-2 322 So.	RE Geoff Nelson	6-2 260 Sr.
Mike Miller	6-3 273 Sr.	Jamaon Hardeman	6-1 262 Fr.
RG Chad Smith	6-6 280 Sr.	OS Jeremy Williams	5-10 204 So.
James Barnard	6-4 291 So.	Brandon Stiggers	6-0 198 Sr.
RT Thad Boatner	6-7 288 So.	MLB Joe Pawelek	6-2 231 So.
Jordan Hearvey	6-4 305 So.	Ben Hixson	6-2 225 Jr.
Y/H Justin Akers	6-5 237 So.	WLB Nick Moore	6-1 226 Sr.
Jordan Adams	6-4 247 Sr.	Antonio Jones	6-3 226 So.
WRZ Ernest Smith	6-3 186 So.	CB Josh Bell	6-0 168 Sr.
Mikai Baker	6-0 186 Jr.	Ralph Rodriguez	5-10 181 Sr.
Y Brad Taylor	6-3 232 Fr.	Jordan Lake	6-2 209 So.
Ben Randle	6-5 206 Fr.	Marlon Price	6-2 193 Jr.
QB Michael Machen	6-6 237 Sr.	Dwain Crawford	6-0 208 Jr.
John David Weed	6-4 214 Jr.	Jake LaMar	6-0 188 Jr.
FB Brandon Whittaker	5-10 197 Sr.	CB Alton Widemon	5-11 178 Sr.
Jay Finley	5-11 195 Fr.	Dominique Criss	5-9 189 Fr.
PK Caleb Allen	6-0 169 Jr.	P Caleb Allen	6-0 169 Jr.

Returning starters in bold

BIG 12 POSITION-BY-

QUARTERBACK

Best: Oklahoma State

(Key players)

Bobby Reid	6-3	235	Jr.
Zac Robinson	6-4	205	So.

The Cowboys don't have a quarterback controversy. But coach Mike Gundy has indicated that Robinson will have opportunities to contribute each week, in various ways. And why not? Robinson threw three touchdown passes against Texas A&M after Reid was injured. He also rushed for 90 yards on only nine carries against Baylor. But Reid is the starter, no question about that. A semifinalist for the Davey O'Brien Award last season, he passed for 2,266 yards and 24 touchdowns and rushed for 500 yards and five touchdowns. His set a school record with 457 total-offense yards against Kansas.

Rest

Texas might have the first-team all-conference quarterback in sophomore Colt McCoy. And the Longhorns would have had the Big 12's best quarterback combination if Jevan Snead hadn't transferred to Mississippi. However, coach Mack Brown is looking for a back-up, whom he plans to play enough to be prepared to step in for McCoy should the need arise. Like Nebraska, Kansas still had two quarterbacks at the end of spring practice, Kerry Meier and Todd Reesing, because neither separated from the other.

RUNNING BACK

Best: Texas A&M

(Key players)

Mike Goodson	6-0	192	So.
Jorvorskie Lane	6-0	274	Jr.
Chris Alexander	5-11	242	Sr.

The Aggies, who get the nod but just barely, have their version of Mr. Outside and Mr. Inside, Goodson and Lane. The speedy Goodson was the leading rusher on the Big 12's best rushing team (in conference games). Overall, he rushed for 847 yards and four touchdowns. But the most impressive statistic might have been his 6.7-yards-per-attempt average on 127 carries. The Austin American-Statesman named him the Big 12 Freshman of the Year. Lane handled the Aggies' scoring, tying a 79-year-old school record with 19 touchdowns to lead the Big 12 and rank sixth in the nation with 114 points. He also rushed for 725 yards and earned second-team all-conference recognition from the coaches. Alexander has carried only 36 times during his career, but his blocking helps clear the way.

Rest

Oklahoma would have ranked first here, of course, if Adrian Peterson hadn't left early for the NFL. The Minnesota Vikings drafted him in the first round. But, as coach Bob Stoops pointed out during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference, the Sooners actually rushed for more yards when Peterson was injured, a reflection of depth. Allen Patrick, a senior, stepped in for Peterson, rushing for 761 yards and four touchdowns. Senior Jacob Gutierrez has three career starts and a 5-yards-per-carry career average. But he'll be behind redshirted freshmen DeMarco Murray and Mossis Madu. Oklahoma State's Dantrell Savage and Keith Tosten combined to rush for 1,451 yards and 14 touchdowns.



Reid

RECEIVER

Best: Texas

(Key players)

Limas Sweed	6-5	219	Sr.
Quan Cosby	5-11	200	Jr.
Nate Jones	6-2	195	Sr.
Billy Pittman	6-0	200	Sr.
Jordan Shipley	6-0	188	Jr.
Jermichael Finley	6-5	236	So.



Sweed

The conference has an abundance of talented wide receivers, with no group better than at Texas. Coach Mack Brown has called it the best he's had. Sweed, who bypassed an opportunity to be a first-round NFL draft pick to return for his senior season, caught at least one touchdown pass in a school-record seven consecutive games, finishing with 12. He also led the team in receptions (46) and receiving yards (801). Cosby caught 45 passes for 525 yards and two touchdowns, while Pittman and Finley, the tight end, finished third and fourth respectively in receptions and receiving yards.

Rest

Oklahoma's top four receivers return also. Malcolm Kelly caught 62 passes for 993 yards and 10 touchdowns, while Juaquin Iglesias caught 41 for 514 yards and two touchdowns. Despite the loss of Joel Filani and Robert Johnson, Texas Tech will have receivers who rank among the most productive in the conference, among them Danny Amendola, L.A. Reed, Grant Walker, Michael Crabtree (redshirted freshman) and running back Shannon Woods. Missouri's receivers are led by tight ends Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman and senior wideout Will Franklin. Nebraska has an experienced group, with Maurice Purify and Terrence Nunn topping the list.

OFFENSIVE LINE

Best: Texas A&M

(Key players)

Cody Wallace	6-4	294	Sr.
Kirk Elder	6-5	298	Sr.
Yemi Babalola	6-4	298	Jr.
Corey Clark	6-6	317	Sr.



Wallace

The Aggies ranked first in the Big 12 in time of possession and third-down conversions and second in rushing (first in conference games only), reflecting a dominant offensive line. Four starters return, led by Elder and Wallace, both of whom earned first-team all-conference recognition. Elder has started 35 consecutive games at guard, while Wallace has started the last 24 at center, after moving from guard. Babalola and Clark, who has 24 starts to his credit, earned all-conference honorable mention last season, even though Babalola was limited by injuries and started only four games.

Rest

Oklahoma's line is big and though young, starters at four positions return, led by guard Duke Robinson (6-5, 330), who also can play tackle, and center Jon Cooper (6-2, 285). Brandon Walker (6-3, 306) started every game and was credited with 125 knockdown blocks. Brandon Braxton (6-6, 312) was the starter at right guard until suffering a broken leg against Colorado. Trent Williams (6-5, 321) replaced him and started the rest of the season. Oh yes, Williams is a sophomore. The others are juniors. Missouri is rebuilding around a solid foundation of tackle Tyler Luellen and center Adam Speiker, both of whom will be starting for a fourth season. Nebraska has starting experience in varying degrees at every position. And Oklahoma State has four who have started, including guard David Koenig and center David Washington.

POSITION BREAKDOWN

DEFENSIVE LINE

Best: Kansas State (Key players)

Ian Campbell	6-5	232	Jr.
Rob Jackson	6-3	265	Sr.
Alphonso Moran	6-0	294	Jr.
Steve Cline	6-1	291	Sr.



Campbell

Everyone has holes to fill up front, but Kansas State can put four players with starting experience on the field, including the best pass-rush tandem in the conference in Campbell and Jackson. The Wildcats led the conference and ranked sixth in the nation in sacks, with 40, and Campbell, who might technically be a linebacker at times in new defensive coordinator Tim Tibesar's scheme, led the way. The former walk-on was credited with 17.5 tackles-for-loss, including 11.5 sacks, while Jackson had 4.5 sacks among his eight tackles-for-loss. Senior Moses Manu and sophomore Eric Childs also were in the rotation at defensive end.

Rest

Texas A&M's front features end Chris Harrington, who had team highs of 30 unassisted tackles, 11.5 tackles-for-loss and 7.5 sacks, and tackle Red Bryant, who has 30 career starts. He missed the end of last season because of a knee injury suffered before the Texas game. Despite the loss of pass rushers C.J. Ah You, Calvin Thibodeaux and Larry Birdine and the departure of Carl Pendleton (who wanted to adopt a younger brother and begin grad school), Oklahoma could have a solid if not outstanding defensive line. Junior Cory Bennett is a returning starter, and senior Steven Coleman started seven games.

LINEBACKER

Best: Texas (Key players)

Rashad Bobino	5-11	228	Jr.
Robert Killebrew	6-2	230	Sr.
Scott Derry	6-3	230	Sr.



Bobino

Bobino, Killebrew and Derry are returning starters from a defense that ranked third nationally against the run, allowing only 62.1 yards per game, 2.3 yards per carry and eight touchdowns on the ground. Bobino, who has started every game during his collegiate career, holds down the middle. He was credited with 74 tackles last season, including 13 for losses. Killebrew has 22 career starts. Derry, who earned all-conference honorable mention from the Associated Press, can, and has, played all three linebacker positions. In addition, sophomore Sergio Kindle, a Parade All-American and national high school player of the year, could figure in the mix. He saw action on the strongside in 11 games last season.

Rest

Nebraska has experience, led by Corey McKeon in the middle and Bo Ruud, a member of the coaches' all-conference first team, on the strongside, moving from the weakside in the spring to replace Stewart Bradley, a third-round draft pick of the Philadelphia Eagles and the team's leading tackler in 2006. Steve Octavien is a playmaker but has been hampered by injuries. Lance Brandenburgh can play all three positions. Oklahoma State has six linebackers with starting experience, including freshman All-Americans Patrick Lavine and Chris Collins, plus Donovan Woods moved from safety to linebacker in the spring and adapted quickly. Iowa State has outstanding linebackers in Alvin Bowen and Jon Banks, who moved to the strongside after five games at free safety.

SECONDARY

Best: Oklahoma (Key players)

Reggie Smith	6-1	197	Jr.
Nic Harris	6-2	226	Jr.
Marcus Walker	5-11	192	Sr.



Smith

The Sooners, who led the Big 12 in pass defense efficiency and interceptions (18), have three first- or second-team all-conference defensive backs. Smith, a first-team selection, can play cornerback and safety. He was the strong safety last season, after starting the first three games at cornerback but moved back to corner in the spring. Harris began as the nickel back but finished as the free safety, leading the team with four interceptions and making 68 tackles, fourth-most on the team. Walker, who has 4.4 speed in the 40, became a starter at cornerback after Smith moved. He had three interceptions, one of which he returned 33 yards for a touchdown in the Fiesta Bowl. Senior D.J. Wolfe, a converted running back, has 14 career starts at cornerback.

Rest

Nebraska ranked 10th in the Big 12 (conference games only) in pass defense but second in pass defense efficiency, behind Oklahoma. The Huskers allowed 2,051 passing yards but only 10 touchdown passes in eight conference games. If not for Zack Bowman's knee injury in the spring, and uncertainty about his availability, the secondary would be considered a strength, with returning starters Cortney Grixby, Andre Jones and Tierre Green, who moved from strong to free safety. Oklahoma State has three returning starters, but like Nebraska, the Cowboys have to improve after ranking 84th nationally in pass defense and 88th in pass defense efficiency.

KICKING

Best: Oklahoma State

(Key players)

Perrish Cox, kick returner	6-1	185	So.
Matt Fodge, punter	6-1	195	Jr.
Jason Ricks, place-kicker	6-2	200	Jr.



Cox

The Cowboys' kicking game remains intact.

Cox, a first-team freshman All-American according to Rivals.com and second-team All-Big 12 selection by the Associated Press, ranked second in the conference and 14th nationally in punt returns and fourth and 35th in kickoff returns. He opened the season by returning a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown against Missouri State, the first Cowboy to do so since Barry Sanders. Fodge was second-team all-conference after averaging 44.9 yards per punt, second-best in school history. Ricks made 10-of-12 field goals, including a 27-yarder with 8 seconds remaining for a 34-31 victory against Alabama in the Independence Bowl. He is a career 2-for-2 from 50 yards or more.

Rest

Oklahoma's kicking game also remains in tact, with returners Reggie Smith and Juaquin Iglesias, place-kicker Garrett Hartley, second-team All-Big 12, and punter Michael Cohen. Hartley made 19-of-20 field goal kicks, the only miss a blocked 44-yarder against Oregon. His 106 points were tied for the third-most by kick scoring in school history. Texas A&M has a proven punter in Justin Brantly, who ranked fourth in the conference (44.3), and an outstanding kickoff returner in Kerry Franks, who led the Big 12 and ranked 10th nationally with a 27.7-yards-per-return average.

HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

First Team

OFFENSE

Pos. Player

		Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
WR	Malcolm Kelly	6-4	217	Jr.	Oklahoma
WR	Adarius Bowman	6-4	220	Sr.	Oklahoma State
WR	Limas Sweed	6-5	219	Sr.	Texas
TE	Martin Rucker	6-6	255	Sr.	Missouri
OL	Cody Wallace	6-4	294	Sr.	Texas A&M
OL	Kirk Elder	6-5	298	Sr.	Texas A&M
OL	Duke Robinson	6-5	330	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Anthony Collins	6-6	300	Jr.	Kansas
OL	Matt Slauson	6-5	335	Jr.	Nebraska
QB	Colt McCoy	6-3	205	So.	Texas
RB	Mike Goodson	6-0	192	So.	Texas A&M
RB	Shannon Woods	5-11	195	Jr.	Texas Tech
PK	Jeff Wolfert	6-2	185	Jr.	Missouri
KR	Kerry Franks	5-11	196	Sr.	Texas A&M

DEFENSE

DL Ian Campbell

DL	Ian Campbell	6-5	232	Jr.	Kansas State
DL	Frank Okam	6-5	320	Sr.	Texas
DL	James McClinton	6-1	283	Sr.	Kansas
DL	Chris Harrington	6-5	267	Sr.	Texas A&M
LB	Alvin Bowen	6-2	216	Sr.	Iowa State
LB	Joe Pawelek	6-2	231	So.	Baylor
LB	Jordon Dizon	6-0	225	Sr.	Colorado
DB	Aqib Talib	6-2	180	Jr.	Kansas
DB	Terrence Wheatley	5-10	175	Sr.	Colorado
DB	Marcus Watts	6-1	191	Sr.	Kansas State
DB	Reggie Smith	6-1	197	Jr.	Oklahoma
P	Matt Fodge	6-1	195	Jr.	Oklahoma State
PR	Perrish Cox	6-1	185	So.	Oklahoma State

PRESEASON ALL-BIG 12

Second Team OFFENSE

Pos.	Player	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
WR	Todd Blythe	6-5	209	Sr.	Iowa State
WR	Maurice Purify	6-4	220	Sr.	Nebraska
WR	Will Franklin	6-2	205	Sr.	Missouri
TE	Chase Coffman	6-6	245	Jr.	Missouri
OL	Brett Byford	6-3	300	Sr.	Nebraska
OL	Tyler Luellen	6-7	295	Sr.	Missouri
OL	Yemi Babalola	6-4	298	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Louis Vasquez	6-6	351	Jr.	Texas Tech
OL	Carl Nicks	6-5	330	Sr.	Nebraska
QB	Graham Harrell	6-2	196	Jr.	Texas Tech
RB	Jamaal Charles	6-1	200	Jr.	Texas
RB	Tony Temple	5-9	200	Sr.	Missouri
PK	Garret Hartley	5-9	198	Sr.	Oklahoma
KR	Marcus Herford	6-3	210	Jr.	Kansas

DEFENSE

DL	Rob Jackson	6-3	265	Sr.	Kansas State
DL	Nathan Peterson	6-4	240	Sr.	Oklahoma State
DL	Lorenzo Williams	6-1	295	Sr.	Missouri
DL	Red Bryant	6-5	325	Sr.	Texas A&M
LB	Jon Banks	6-2	219	Sr.	Iowa State
LB	Corey McKeon	6-1	225	Sr.	Nebraska
LB	Bo Ruud	6-3	235	Sr.	Nebraska
DB	Joe Garcia	6-2	215	Sr.	Texas Tech
DB	Marcus Walker	5-11	192	Sr.	Oklahoma
DB	Nic Harris	6-3	226	Jr.	Oklahoma
DB	Andre Sexton	6-1	210	So.	Oklahoma State
P	Justin Brantly	6-4	228	Jr.	Texas A&M
PR	Queito Teasley	6-1	187	Jr.	Baylor

NORTH

						
Sept. 1	Colorado State	Kent State*	Cent. Michigan	@Auburn	Illinois (St. Louis)	Nevada
Sept. 8	@Arizona State	Northern Iowa	SE Louisiana	San Jose State	@Mississippi	@Wake Forest
Sept. 15	Florida State	Iowa	Toledo	Missouri State	West. Michigan	USC
Sept. 22	Miami, Ohio	@Toledo	Florida Int.	idle	Illinois State	Ball State
Sept. 29	Oklahoma	@Nebraska	idle	@Texas	idle	Iowa State
Oct. 6	@Baylor	@Texas Tech	@Kansas State	Kansas	Nebraska	@Missouri
Oct. 13	@Kansas State	Texas	Baylor	Colorado	@Oklahoma	Oklahoma State
Oct. 20	Kansas	Oklahoma	@Colorado	@Oklahoma State	Texas Tech	Texas A&M
Oct. 27	@Texas Tech	@Missouri	@Texas A&M	Baylor	Iowa State	@Texas
Nov. 3	Missouri	Kansas State	Nebraska	@Iowa State	@Colorado	@Kansas
Nov. 10	@Iowa State	Colorado	@Oklahoma State	@Nebraska	Texas A&M	Kansas State
Nov. 17	idle	@Kansas	Iowa State	Missouri	@Kansas State	idle
Nov. 24	Nebraska*****	idle	Missouri (KC)	@Fresno State	Kansas (KC)	@Colorado*****

2007 BIG 12 SCHEDULES

SOUTH

						
Sept. 1	@TCU	North Texas	@Georgia	Arkansas State	Montana State	@SMU**
Sept. 8	Rice	Miami, Fla.	Florida Atlantic	TCU	Fresno State	UTEP
Sept. 15	Texas State	Utah State	@Troy***	@Cent. Florida	UL-Monroe	@Rice
Sept. 22	@Buffalo	@Tulsa*****	Texas Tech	Rice	@Miami, Fla.****	@Oklahoma St.
Sept. 29	@Texas A&M	@Colorado	Sam Houston St.	Kansas State	Baylor	Northwestern St.
Oct. 6	Colorado	@Texas	@Texas A&M	Oklahoma	Oklahoma State	Iowa State
Oct. 13	@Kansas	Missouri	@Nebraska	@Iowa State	@Texas Tech	Texas A&M
Oct. 20	Texas	@Iowa State	Kansas State	@Baylor	@Nebraska	@Missouri
Oct. 27	@Kansas State	idle	idle	Nebraska	Kansas	Colorado
Nov. 3	Texas Tech	Texas A&M	Texas	@Oklahoma State	@Oklahoma	@Baylor
Nov. 10	@Oklahoma	Baylor	Kansas	Texas Tech	@Missouri	@Texas
Nov. 17	Oklahoma State	@Texas Tech	@Baylor	idle	idle	Oklahoma
Nov. 24	idle	Oklahoma State	@Oklahoma	@Texas A&M*****	Texas*****	idle

*Thursday, Aug. 30.

**Monday, Sept. 3.

***Friday, Sept. 14.

****Thursday, Sept. 20.

*****Friday, Sept. 21.

*****Friday, Nov. 23.

NONCONFERENCE

OPPONENTS



Scout

Pete Carroll's Trojans defeated Bill Callahan's Huskers 28-10 last September before a crowd of 92,000 at the historic Los Angeles Coliseum. The two tradition-rich schools will meet for the fourth time Sept. 15 in Lincoln. The game will be televised by ABC at 7 p.m. (CDT). USC leads the series 2-0-1.

Sept. 1
Sept. 8
Sept. 15
Sept. 22

Nevada
@Wake Forest
USC
Ball State

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Page 110

NEVADA WOLF PACK

Sept. 1 Lincoln

If strength and conditioning test results are any indication, it would seem the level of dedication Nevada's football players have displayed while preparing for the 2007 season has never been higher.

Prior to spring practice, every Wolf Pack player registered a passing time in the "Nevada Run," which challenges players to navigate through an obstacle course that is designed to test their agility and stamina. Watching every single one of his players successfully complete the test in the allotted time was a first for 23rd-year Nevada coach Chris Ault.

"That's the first time in my career that we've had every single player make the time," said Ault, a 2002 College Football Hall of Fame inductee. "Suffice it to say, I am pleased with the gains we have made in our strength and conditioning."

Ault's hope is that the offseason progress displayed by his players bodes well for a Wolf Pack squad that returns 14 starters from last year's 8-5 team, which finished third in the Western Athletic Conference with a 5-3 league mark. A total of 44 letterwinners are back from a team that made its second consecutive bowl appearance with a 21-20 loss to Miami (Fla.) in the MPC Computers Bowl in Boise, Idaho.

"Overall, it has been a very good offseason and we are looking forward to the opportunity of working with this team," said Ault, who is 185-78-1 in three different coaching stints at Nevada, covering 22 seasons. "We have a lot to get accomplished."

Ault's first order of business is finding a starting quarterback to replace 1,900-yard passer Jeff Rowe, who was selected in the fifth round of the NFL Draft by the Cincinnati Bengals. The candidates are sophomore Nick Graziano — the only Wolf Pack signal-caller with game experience — and redshirt freshmen Colin Kaepernick

and Tyler Lantrip.

Playing mostly on special teams, Graziano appeared in all 13 contests for Nevada in 2006, finishing 9-of-17 passing for 92 yards and a touchdown. Despite an experience edge and an impressive showing in the spring game, Ault insists the job won't simply be handed to Graziano in the fall.

"I think we are going to see some good competition there at quarterback," Ault said. "I expect those guys to push each other for time. They are all very talented, and I am excited to see how each one develops."

Nevada lost its leading receiver in three-year starter Caleb Spencer, but returns five other wideouts who made receptions last season. Juniors Marko Mitchell and Mike McCoy, who combined for 63 receptions and 13 TD catches, will be counted on to pick up the slack.

Several others figure to get opportunities in the Wolf Pack offense, which features several four-receiver sets.

"Overall, I think our receiving corps has more speed than it has had in recent years," Ault said. "This is a good, experienced group, and if we have the speed that I think we have, then we should see some good things out of this group."

It's a similar situation in the backfield where junior Luke Lippincott and Brandon Fragger will attempt to replace 1,000-yard rusher Robert Hubbard. Lippincott tied for the team lead with nine rushing TDs last year and was second with 456 yards on the ground, while Fragger averaged nearly 5 yards per carry before suffering an injury.

"We have a lot of good experience in the backfield," Ault said. "All of those backs tested very well in the off-season, and I expect to see some strong competition there this fall."

John Byrne



All-WAC offensive lineman Dominic Green is moving from tackle back to center.

While the bad news for Nevada may be that just five offensive starters return, the good news is that three of them are on the offensive line. All-WAC performer Dominic Green is moving from tackle back to center where he's on the Dave Rimington Trophy Watch list. Green is joined as a returning starter by senior tackle Charles Manu and junior guard Greg Hall.

Defensively, Nevada returns seven starters from a unit that ranked second in the WAC last season. However, the Wolf Pack will face a difficult challenge in replacing the play-making abilities of cornerback Joe Garcia and defensive end J.J. Milan.

Plenty of quality players return, though, especially at linebacker, which figures to be one of Wolf Pack's greatest strengths, with returning starters Ezra Butler, Jeremy Engstrom and Joshua Mauga. Butler was an All-WAC selection in 2006 and is on the Butkus Award watch list after recording 17.5 tackles for loss (18th nationally), including seven sacks as a junior.



John Byrum

Wolf Pack senior Ezra Butler is one of three returning starters at linebacker.

Despite losing multi-year starters in Garcia and Nick Hawthorne to graduation, senior cornerback Paul Pratt and sophomore free safety Jonathon Amaya return as starters to lead a unit that has more depth than in past years. Cornerbacks De'Angelo Wilson and Devon Walker and safeties Justin Jackson and Uche Anyanwu all saw significant playing time last season.

Following Nevada's spring game, Ault was very optimistic about his team's defensive potential.

"The defense has been so doggone good all spring, it's bound to have some hiccups, but they flew around," Ault told the Reno Gazette-Journal. "I'll tell you, Matt Hines, Josh Mauga, Jeremy Engstrom and Butler have had as good a spring as I've had with any linebacker corps and nose guard corps."

"And Erics Clark has really come alive. I'm excited about our defense because they can really run."

One area that won't feature much turnover is special teams where Ault is pleased to return place-kicker Brett Jaekle (8-of-11 on field goals in '06) and punter Zacary Whited. Also back are Wilson (punt returns) and Dwayne Sanders (kickoff returns), who both ranked among the top 25 in the country last season.

"That is a nice luxury," Ault said of his special teams units. ■ — *By Terry Douglass*

AT A GLANCE

STRENGTHS

Nevada only returns five full-time starters on the offensive side of the ball, but three of them are on the offensive line in senior guard **Charles Manu**, junior center **Dominic Green** and junior guard **Greg Hall**. Green was named to the preseason watch list for the Dave Rimington Trophy, presented to the top center in the country.

QUESTION MARKS

The question of exactly who is going to replace **Jeff Rowe** at quarterback remains somewhat unsettled as sophomore **Nick Graziano** and redshirt freshman **Colin Kaepernick** are listed as co-No. 1s on the Wolf Pack's post-spring depth chart. Graziano, who had 17 pass attempts last year is the only QB with game experience.

DIFFERENCE-MAKERS

Defensive back **De'Angelo Wilson** and running back **Dwayne Sanders** provide Nevada with a dangerous return game. Wilson averaged 14.2 yards on 16 punt returns to lead the WAC and rank ninth nationally. Sanders ranked second in the WAC and 23rd in the country in kickoff return average (25.0).

2006 RECORD: 8-5

CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

S 1	@Fresno St.	L, 28-19
S 9	@Arizona St.	L, 52-21
S 16	Colorado St.	W, 28-10
S 22	Northwestern	W, 31-21
S 30	@UNLV	W, 31-3
O 7	@Hawaii	L, 41-34
O 21	San Jose St.	W, 23-7
O 28	New Mexico St.	W, 48-21
N 4	@Idaho	W, 45-7
N 11	Utah St.	W, 42-0
N 18	@Louisiana Tech	W, 42-0
N 25	Boise St.	L, 38-7
D 31	*Miami (Fla.)	L, 21-20

*MPC Computers Bowl, Boise, Idaho

THIRD TIME AROUND

Chris Ault is heading into the fourth year of his third stint as Nevada's head football coach. After serving as the Wolf Pack's athletic director from 1986-2003, Ault's third time has indeed been a charm as the program is shooting for a third consecutive bowl bid. The former Nevada quarterback is 185-78-1 in his 22 years as head coach with eight conference titles.

THE FIREMAN

Running back **Luke Lippincott** earned one of the team's two Fireman's Awards last season, honoring a Wolf Pack player who stepped forward in a time of need. The 6-foot-2, 215-pound junior converted from safety to the offensive backfield during the offseason and was Nevada's second-leading rusher with 459 yards and nine touchdowns, which tied for the team lead.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

ST	John Bender	6-8	320	Fr.	DE	Mundrae Clifton	6-2	292	Jr.
	Clayton Johnson	6-4	295	Jr.		Jay Dixon	6-2	270	Sr.
SG	Charles Manu	6-3	300	Sr.	NG	Matt Hines	6-1	285	Sr.
	Kyle Robertson	6-3	290	Sr.		Nate Agaiava	6-2	285	So.
C	Dominic Green	6-3	295	Jr.	DE	Erics Clark	6-6	270	Sr.
	Fred White	6-1	280	Sr.		Thomas Flinn	6-2	270	So.
WG	Greg Hall	6-3	285	Jr.	SLB	Jeremy Engstrom	6-1	247	Sr.
	Brad Eskew	6-3	295	Jr.		Nick Fuhr	6-3	245	Sr.
WT	Alonzo Durham	6-4	290	So.	WLB	Joshua Mauga	6-2	245	Jr.
	Mike Gallett	6-6	295	Fr.		Jared Silva	5-11	220	Fr.
WRY	Adam Bishop	6-4	245	Sr.	MLB	Kevin Porter	6-1	240	So.
	Junior Puloka	6-4	231	So.		Jerome Johnson	6-1	265	Jr.
WRZ	Arthur King	6-1	195	So.	BLB	Ezra Butler	6-2	248	Sr.
	Chris Wellington	6-1	185	Fr.		John Simpson	6-2	220	Sr.
WRX	Jack Darlington	6-2	190	Jr.	CB	Devon Walker	6-0	180	Sr.
	Kyle Sammons	5-11	195	Sr.		Shannon Sevor	5-10	196	Sr.
WRF	Marko Mitchell	6-4	195	Jr.	SS	Uche Anyanwu	6-4	220	Jr.
	Mike McCoy	6-0	190	Jr.		Mike Samples	6-0	195	So.
RB	Luke Lippincott	6-2	215	Jr.	FS	Jonathon Amaya	6-2	190	So.
	Brandon Fragger	5-9	195	So.		Justin Jackson	6-1	195	Sr.
QB	Nick Graziano	6-1	220	So.	CB	Paul Pratt	5-10	185	Jr.
	Colin Kaepernick	6-6	205	Fr.		Kenny Viser	6-1	195	Fr.
PK	Brett Jaekle	6-4	210	Jr.	P	Zacary Whited	6-2	190	Sr.

Returning starters in bold

WAKE FOREST DEMOM DEACONS

Sept. 8,
Winston-Salem, N.C.

The awards have all been collected, the conference championship rings have been passed out and Wake Forest's record-breaking 2006 season has been replayed, dissected and glorified countless times by every Demon Deacon fan.

The effect of last year's 11-3 season, which included an Atlantic Coast Conference title and a berth in the Orange Bowl, predictably carried over into spring practice. A camera crew documented coach Jim Grobe's every move during the spring scrimmage, enjoyed by a record crowd. And sophomore quarterback Riley Skinner can't even count how many autographs he signed.

Clearly, Wake Forest football is no longer an afterthought in Winston-Salem, N.C. Could it be there's a football culture developing in a place where basketball has long ruled the roost?

"I hope so," Grobe said. "I think there are some expectations now that weren't there before, but that's not all bad. I think that's a good thing."

Coming from Ohio after the 2000 season, Grobe inherited a Wake Forest program that won a total of 38 games in the 1990s. Grobe's teams have won 37 games in his six seasons, earned two bowl bids and won the ACC title for the first time since 1970 after being picked to finish last in the Atlantic Division in a preseason media poll.

Also consider:

- Wake Forest's 11 wins destroyed the school record for single-season victories. The previous mark was eight, set in 1944 and tied in 1979 and 1992.
- The Demon Deacons were the most improved team in the country, going from 4-7 in 2005 to 11-3 last season.
- Wake Forest was ranked in the Associated Press Top 25 for a school-record nine consecutive weeks. The Deacons finished at No. 18.

● Grobe's team was the first in school history to go 6-0 in road games. Wake Forest beat Florida State in Tallahassee for the first time since 1959 and beat North Carolina State in Raleigh for the first time since 1984.

All great accomplishments, Grobe said, but now comes the most difficult part.

"It's fun, but I think the biggest danger for us is we need to realize what got us to an Orange Bowl and an ACC championship, and that was lots of hard work and

playing hard on Saturdays," said Grobe, who was named the national coach of the year by the American Football Coaches Association.

"It's nice to get some attention — I feel good for our football team, they deserve it — but at the same time, I think the hardest thing to do is have the kind of season we just had and then come back the next year and have another good season and be another good football team again."

"Getting there is kind of fun, but staying there is the toughest part."

Skinner couldn't agree more.

"We've kind of tried to put last year behind us during the spring because we didn't want that to affect how we came out and started playing," Skinner said. "We know that it's definitely going to be tough to come back and stay on top with where we

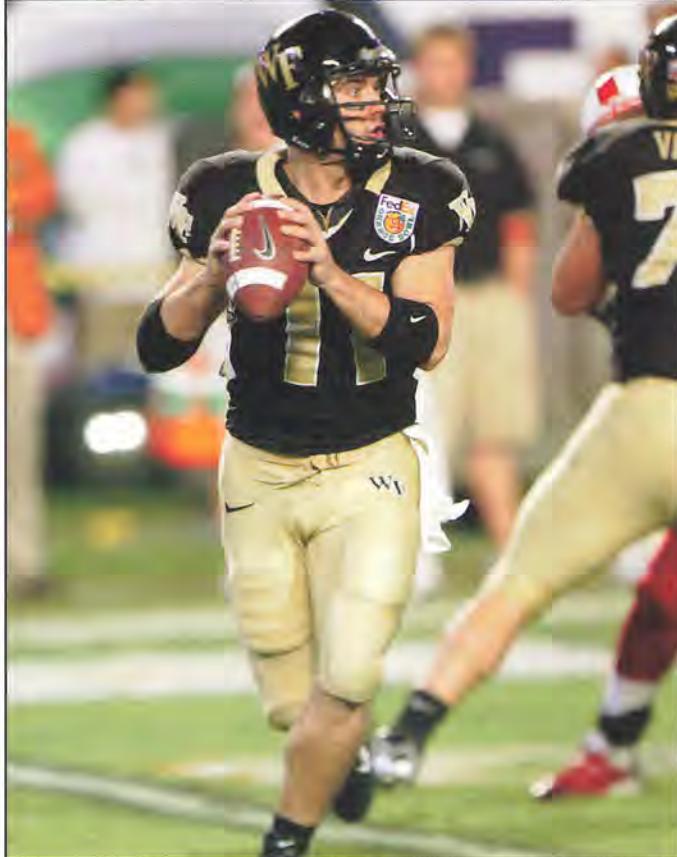
left off.

"The ACC is so tough. We know that we're going to have to work especially hard to stay on top."

Skinner said Grobe and his staff will keep the Deacons moving forward and not looking back.

"Our coaches do such a good job of talking about that and keeping everybody humble and keeping everybody grounded and knowing the reality of the deal," Skinner said. "We know that just because you won last year does not mean that you're going to win the next year."

Brain Webster/Sports Film



Sophomore quarterback Riley Skinner completed 65.8 percent of his passes for 2,051 yards and nine touchdowns.

Not that the Deacons aren't eager to try.

"It's going to be fun, and it's going to be a challenge," Skinner said. "It's going to be a whole different mindset going into the season, knowing that people have kind of got the bull's-eye on you and want to get you back for last year."

Skinner's continued development will be crucial to the success of Wake Forest's offense, which returns eight players with starting experience. Last year as a redshirt freshman, Skinner took over when starting quarterback Ben Mauk was injured in the season opener and completed 171-of-260 pass attempts (65.8 percent) for 2,051 yards with nine touchdowns and five interceptions.

All-ACC center Steve Justice is a third-year starter and leads an experienced offensive line that also includes an emerging talent in guard Chris DeGeare.

The leading returning receiver is Kenneth Moore (32 receptions for 314 yards), despite the fact that the senior had to convert to running back last year because of injuries. He led the Demon Deacons with 951 all-purpose yards, also averaging 13 yards per punt return.

The Deacons hope to be more settled in the backfield this year if senior Micah Andrews can return to past form. He rushed for 256 yards and two TDs in

three games last year before suffering a season-ending knee injury.

"I thought that Micah was special when he got hurt and I think he can be special again," Grobe said. "He'll be fine with everything except confidence in his knee and that's what he's going to have to develop as quickly as possible in August."

Defensively, just five starters return, and Grobe's team will be hard-pressed to replace talented linebacker Jon Abbate, who left school early to enter the NFL Draft, as well as its top pass rusher in Jyles Tucker.

Junior outside linebacker Aaron Curry is the team's top returning tackler, while junior cornerback Alphonso Smith and senior defensive end Matt Robinson will be counted on heavily.

Robinson, a 6-foot-2, 248-pound redshirt senior, is expected to be back at full speed after missing all of last season with a broken kneecap suffered in the 2005 season finale. He led Wake Forest with 10.5 tackles for loss and 4.5 sacks in 2005 and showed signs of being his former energetic self in the spring.

Special teams looks to be a strength, presuming junior punter and place-kicker Sam Swank is fully recovered from surgery for an athletic hernia that forced him to miss half the spring. The All-ACC selection was 23-of-31 on field-goal attempts last year, including hitting 5-of-7 from beyond 50 yards. ■ — By Terry Douglass



Junior linebacker Aaron Curry is Wake Forest's top returning tackler.

AT A GLANCE

STRENGTHS

Eight starters return on the offensive side of the ball for Wake Forest, including up-and-coming redshirt sophomore quarterback **Riley Skinner**. Preseason All-America candidate **Steve Justice** will anchor the offensive line for a third consecutive season at center.

QUESTION MARKS

While Wake Forest will have to replace seven defensive players from last year's unit, that came as no surprise. However, the Demon Deacons expected do-everything special teams performer **Sam Swank** to be back, but he missed the second half of spring practice after having surgery for a sports hernia. In 2006, Swank handled every field goal, point-after kick, kickoff and punt for his team while earning first-team All-ACC honors.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

After a redshirt freshman season in which Skinner set 10 new school records and was named to the freshman All-America team by The Sporting News, much is expected of the 6-foot-1, 200-pound quarterback. A year ago, he passed for 2,053 yards and nine touchdowns and joined **Colt McCoy** of Texas as the only freshmen quarterbacks to win 10 or more games.

STAYING PUT

Following a very successful season in which he led Wake Forest to an 11-3 record, including an Orange Bowl bid, many expected coach **Jim Grobe** to bolt for another job. Speculation was that Grobe would be a candidate for jobs at Alabama, Air Force, Michigan State, North Carolina and North Carolina State, but he opted to stay put and signed a 10-year contract.

2006 RECORD: 11-3 CONFERENCE FINISH: 6-2

S 2	Syracuse	W, 20-10
S 9	Duke	W, 14-13
S 16	@Connecticut	W, 24-13
S 23	@Mississippi	W, 27-3
S 30	Liberty	W, 34-14
O 7	Clemson	L, 27-17
O 14	@N. Carolina St.	W, 25-23
O 28	@North Carolina	W, 24-17
N 4	Boston College	W, 21-14
N 11	@Florida St.	W, 30-0
N 18	Virginia Tech	L, 27-6
N 25	@Maryland	W, 38-24
D 2	*Georgia Tech	W, 9-6
J 2	**Louisville	L, 24-13

*ACC Championship at Jacksonville, Fla.

**Orange Bowl at Miami

MR. VERSATILITY

Wake Forest senior **Kenneth Moore** is the epitome of a team player. A starting wide receiver for seven games at the start of last season, Moore switched to running back due to a rash of injuries there and finished with 507 yards rushing, making five starts at the new position.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

LT	Louis Frazier	6-4	315	Sr.	DE	Anthony Davis	6-5	251	Jr.
	Joe Birdsong	6-4	290	So.		Antonio Wilson	6-1	255	Jr.
LG	Matthew Brim	6-4	294	Sr.	NG	Boo Robinson	6-2	326	So.
	Barrett McMillin	6-3	288	So.		Michael Carter	6-3	317	Jr.
C	Steve Justice	6-4	284	Sr.	DT	John Russell	6-3	250	So.
	Trey Bailey	6-2	289	So.		Zach Stukes	6-2	274	Sr.
RG	Chris DeGeare	6-4	362	Jr.	DE	Jeremy Thompson	6-5	264	Sr.
	Gage Crews	6-4	305	So.		Matt Robinson	6-2	248	Sr.
RT	Jeff Griffin	6-3	298	So.	OLB	Aaron Curry	6-3	240	Jr.
	Boomer Peterson	6-5	303	So.		Mike Simmons	6-1	219	Jr.
QB	Riley Skinner	6-1	200	So.	MLB	Eric Berry	6-1	288	Jr.
	Brett Hodges	6-1	180	So.		Dominique Midgett	6-2	242	So.
TB	Kevin Harris	6-1	230	So.	OLB	Stanley Arnoux	6-1	245	Jr.
	Josh Adams	6-0	180	Fr.		Chantz McClinic	5-10	225	Jr.
FB	Rich Bolton	6-1	259	Jr.	CB	Alphonso Smith	5-9	191	Jr.
	Mike Rinfrette	6-3	260	So.		Brandon Ghee	6-0	182	So.
WR	Kevin Marion	5-10	168	Sr.		Kerry Major	5-11	179	Jr.
	Demir Boldin	5-11	220	Jr.		Channing Schofield	5-11	193	So.
WR	Kenneth Moore	6-0	204	Sr.	SS	Aaron Mason	5-9	199	Sr.
	Chip Brinkman	6-1	210	Jr.		Kevin Patterson	5-10	185	Jr.
TE	John Tereshinski	6-3	240	Sr.	FS	Chip Vaughn	6-2	220	Jr.
	Zac Salmon	6-5	250	Sr.		Alex Frye	6-3	190	Fr.
PK	Sam Swank	6-2	206	So.	P	Sam Swank	6-2	206	So.

Returning starters in bold

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TROJANS

Sept. 15, Lincoln

Finishing with 11 victories and being ranked among the top five in the final major polls hardly qualifies as a disappointing season.

Then again, considering the heights that coach Pete Carroll has taken Southern California's football program to in recent years, a two-loss season with no trip to the national championship game probably bordered on disastrous to Trojan fans who have grown accustomed to winning at the highest level.

The good news for the USC faithful is that it appears the Men of Troy are once again loaded with talent and set to make another serious run at their third national title in Carroll's seventh year since taking over what had become a downtrodden program. Southern California returns 17 starters — 10 on defense — from last year's squad that capped an 11-2 season with a 32-18 win over Michigan in the Rose Bowl.

Looking ahead, Carroll is understandably optimistic.

"We don't make predictions, but if we can maintain the high level of competitiveness, intensity and work ethic that is the foundation of our program, then we can set ourselves up for some good things," Carroll said. "We have the nucleus of a very strong, successful team."

Carroll certainly has to be considered part of that solid foundation. He's the nation's winningest active coach with a 65-12 (.844) record in his first six seasons at Southern California. Six of those losses came in his first year with the program in 2001, and the Trojans have won 56 of their last 60 games with the four losses coming by a total of 12 points.

Last year, USC's setbacks came at Oregon State (33-31) and at UCLA (13-9). The upset loss to the rival Bruins was possibly the only thing that kept the Trojans from playing in a fourth consecutive national title game.

For Southern California to return to a championship

setting, the team will count heavily on senior quarterback John David Booty. In his first season as the Trojan starter, the 6-foot-3, 210-pounder completed 61.9 percent of his pass attempts for 3,347 yards and 29 touchdowns, with nine interceptions, earning him all-conference honors and pushing his name forward in the conversation of 2007 Heisman Trophy contenders.

Booty, who waited patiently behind Matt Leinart before getting his starting call, said he couldn't be happier with his situation.

"I'm exactly where I saw myself coming out of high school — I'm in that position," Booty told the Orange County Register. "For some guys, it happens sooner than others. You've just got to be patient."

Possibly one of the most remarkable position battles in the country will take place in preseason practice as USC will have 10 scholarship running backs competing for the starting job. Three players who started at the position in 2006 — C.J. Gable, Emmanuel Moody and Chauncey Washington — would appear to have the inside track, but Carroll is determined to improve upon last year's average of 128 yards rushing per game.

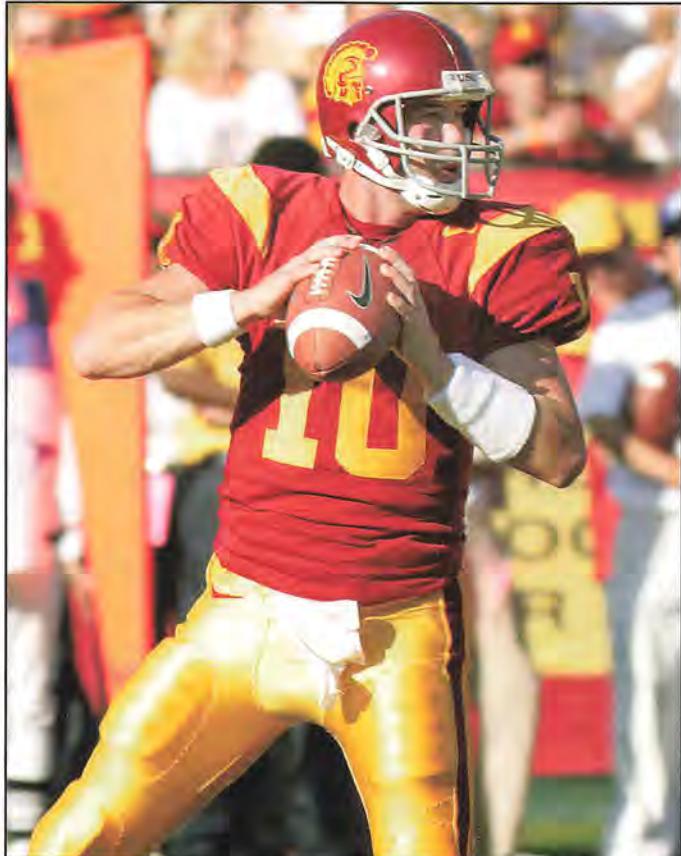
Seven scholarship tailbacks were on the team in the spring. Prep All-Americans Broderick Green, Joe McKnight and Marc Tyler will join the fray in the fall.

"Tailback will be an exciting position to watch in 2007," Carroll said. "There should be quite the competition between the young tailbacks from last year and the new ones coming in."

"C.J. Gable was our most productive tailback last year, but Emmanuel Moody, Allen Bradford and Staton Johnson are all hungry and talented enough to get in there."

The Trojans will be dealing with the loss of the best one-two receiving combination in the country as All-Americans Dwayne Jarrett and Steve Smith have moved

USC Sports Information



John David Booty completed 61.9 percent of his passes for 3,347 yards and 29 touchdowns in his first season as a starter.

on to the NFL. The most experienced candidate is Patrick Turner, who had 29 receptions last year. Sophomores Travon Patterson and Vidal Hazelton are expected to be in the mix as well as redshirt freshman speedster Jamere Holland.

Senior tight end Fred Davis, who had 38 catches in '06, is back as a starter.

Despite losing All-America center Ryan Kalil, USC returns three starters on the offensive line, including two-time first-team All-America left tackle Sam Baker. Guards Chilo Rachal and Drew Radovich are also returning full-time starters.

"Sam Baker is among the best offensive linemen in the country," Carroll said. "Sam, Chilo and Drew Radovich form a solid nucleus . . . but the key is replacing Ryan Kalil at center. That could be the biggest question mark on our team."



USC Sports Information

Sam Baker, a two-time first-team All-American, is a fourth-year starter at left tackle.

(ninth), scoring defense (11th), total defense (20th) and pass efficiency defense (22nd). Eight of the top nine tacklers are back, including the top two.

"We expect great things from our defense," Carroll said. "It should be faster, bigger, stronger and deeper than last year. We have a lot of talented, experienced players coming back."

"This should really be the strength of our team."

USC is touting all three of its linebackers as potential All-America and Butkus Award candidates. Returning are weakside linebacker Keith Rivers (85 tackles last year) and middle linebacker Rey Maualuga (78 tackles), while converted defensive end Brian Cushing, who led the Trojans in tackles for loss last year, makes the move to strongside linebacker.

"No doubt, this is the best position on the team," Carroll said. "It's the biggest, fastest, most aggressive linebacking group we've had."

Southern California's defensive line is led by a pair of standout seniors in All-America nose tackle Sedrick Ellis and defensive end Lawrence Jackson.

The four returning starters in the secondary are led by senior cornerback Terrell Thomas and junior safety Kevin Ellison, while safety Taylor Mays was the national defensive freshman of the year in '06, leading the team in interceptions with three. ■ — *By Terry Douglass*

AT A GLANCE



STRENGTHS

Name a position — any position — and chances are USC has stockpiled talented players there. It only stands to reason, as the Trojans routinely sign the country's top recruiting class. We'll defer to coach **Pete Carroll**, who says that linebacker is his team's strength. With a trio of All-America and Butkus Award candidates in **Keith Rivers**, **Rey Maualuga** and **Brian Cushing**, it's difficult to argue otherwise.

QUESTION MARKS

If there is one position that causes concern, it's probably at place-kicker as returning starter **Mario Danelo** was killed in an accidental fall from a cliff last January. The senior-to-be was one of the nation's most accurate kickers, hitting 26-of-28 field-goal attempts in his two-year career as a starter. Junior **David Buehler**, who made a 49-yard field goal against California, is the likely replacement.

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

USC boasts a plethora of play-makers, but once again, the success will likely hinge on the performance of quarterback **John David Booty**. Facing the pressure of succeeding 2004 Heisman winner **Matt Leinart**, Booty completed nearly 62 percent of his passes for 3,347 yards and 29 TDs.

WHAT A RUN

In the past five seasons, USC has recorded five top-four finishes in the final AP poll, including winning national championships in 2003 and 2004. During that span, the Trojans also own an unprecedented five consecutive BCS appearances, five Pac-10 titles and a record of 59-6.

2006 RECORD: 11-2

CONFERENCE FINISH: 7-2

S 2	@Arkansas	W, 50-14
S 16	Nebraska	W, 28-10
S 23	@Arizona	W, 20-3
S 30	@Washington St.	W, 28-22
O 7	Washington	W, 26-20
O 14	Arizona St.	W, 28-21
O 28	@Oregon St.	L, 33-31
N 4	@Stanford	W, 42-0
N 11	Oregon	W, 35-10
N 18	California	W, 23-9
N 25	Notre Dame	W, 44-24
D 2	@UCLA	L, 13-9
J 1	*Michigan	W, 32-18

*Rose Bowl, Pasadena, Calif.

NEW ROLES

USC had to make some offseason adjustments to its coaching staff as offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach **Lane Kiffin** left to become the head coach of the NFL's Oakland Raiders. Trojans' assistant head coach **Steve Sarkisian** was promoted to offensive coordinator and tight ends coach **Brennan Carroll** will assume Kiffin's role as recruiting coordinator.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

LT	Sam Baker	6-6	305	Sr.	DE	Lawrence Jackson	6-5	265	Sr.
	Butch Lewis	6-7	300	Fr.		Alex Morrow	6-6	270	Sr.
LG	Jeff Byers	6-3	285	Jr.	NT	Sedrick Ellis	6-1	295	Sr.
	Alatini Malu	6-4	330	Sr.		Averell Spicer	6-2	295	Sr.
C	Matt Spanos	6-5	305	Sr.	DT	Fili Moala	6-4	295	Jr.
	Nick Howell	6-5	265	Sr.		Chris Barrett	6-5	265	Sr.
RG	Chilo Rachal	6-5	300	Jr.	DE	Kyle Moore	6-6	260	Jr.
	Thomas Herring	6-6	330	So.		Chris Barrett	6-5	265	Sr.
RT	Drew Radovich	6-5	305	Sr.	SLB	Brian Cushing	6-4	245	Jr.
	Charles Brown	6-6	285	So.		Clay Matthews	6-4	230	Jr.
TE	Fred Davis	6-4	260	Sr.	MLB	Rey Maualuga	6-3	250	Jr.
	Jimmy Miller	6-5	260	Jr.		Thomas Williams	6-3	240	Sr.
SE	Patrick Turner	6-5	230	Jr.	WLB	Keith Rivers	6-3	230	Sr.
	David Ausberry	6-5	215	Fr.		Kaluka Maiava	6-0	225	Jr.
FL	Vidal Hazelton	6-3	200	So.	CB	Cary Harris	6-0	180	Jr.
	Travon Patterson	5-11	180	So.		Kevin Thomas	6-1	180	Jr.
QB	John David Booty	6-3	210	Sr.	FS	Taylor Mays	6-4	225	So.
	Mark Sanchez	6-3	225	So.		Josh Pinkard	6-1	215	Jr.
FB	Stanley Havili	6-1	220	Fr.	SS	Kevin Ellison	6-1	220	Jr.
	Cooper Stephenson	6-3	220	Fr.		Mozique McCurtis	6-1	225	Jr.
TB	Chauncey Washington	6-1	220	Sr.	CB	Terrell Thomas	6-1	200	Sr.
	C.J. Gable	6-1	190	So.		Shareece Wright	6-0	185	Jr.
PK	David Buehler	6-2	225	Jr.	P	Greg Woidneck	6-0	195	Jr.

Returning starters in bold

BALL STATE CARDINALS

Sept. 22 Lincoln

As one of just 18 NCAA Division I-A head coaches who will coach at their alma mater this season, rest assured that turning around Ball State's football program is a project near and dear to Brady Hoke's heart.

"I take a great amount of pride in being a Ball State Cardinal, and I have a responsibility to my school to field a top-notch football program," Hoke said. "We have made great progress in the last three years, and this past spring was the most productive since I've been here."

"The players understand what the coaching staff expects of them on the field and in the classroom, and they also take great pride in being a Ball State Cardinal."

Hoke, who was a four-year letterman at Ball State from 1977-80, is just 15-31 in his first four seasons as head coach in his return to the Muncie, Ind., school, but guided his team to a 5-7 record last season. The Cardinals were 5-3 in Mid-American Conference play, marking the first time they've won five league games since 1996.

Although there was obviously no bowl game for Ball State, the Cardinals finished their season with back-to-back wins over Toledo and Kent State and hope their winning ways extend into the 2007 season.

"We had a great spring, and that carried over the momentum from the way we ended last season and worked hard through the winter," Hoke said. "We have gotten a lot of things accomplished, but we have a long way to go. We are not even close to being ready to play Miami (Ohio) University Aug. 30."

"Our players will come back to campus ready to run the marathon."

Going the distance this season could be made easier by the return of seven offensive starters, including quarterback Nate Davis. As a true freshman splitting time last

season with Joey Lynch, Davis completed 150 of 245 pass attempts for 1,975 yards and 18 touchdowns with eight interceptions.

Despite his inexperience, Davis finished 17th in the country in passing efficiency (147.25 rating), as he and Lynch teamed up to help Ball State amass a school-record 3,112 passing yards in 2006. Davis's 18 scoring tosses tied the single-season school record set by Lynch in 2005.

"Nate Davis is a fighter," Hoke said. "He has done a good job in the weight room and with his conditioning. He is understanding more and more of the offense with every practice.

"He is learning how to take total control of the offense in the huddle, which is a different aura than what he was doing last fall."

Four of Ball State's five starting offensive linemen return, led by junior tackles Andrew Ramsey and Robert Brewster, as well as junior center Dan Gerberry and sophomore guard John Purdy.

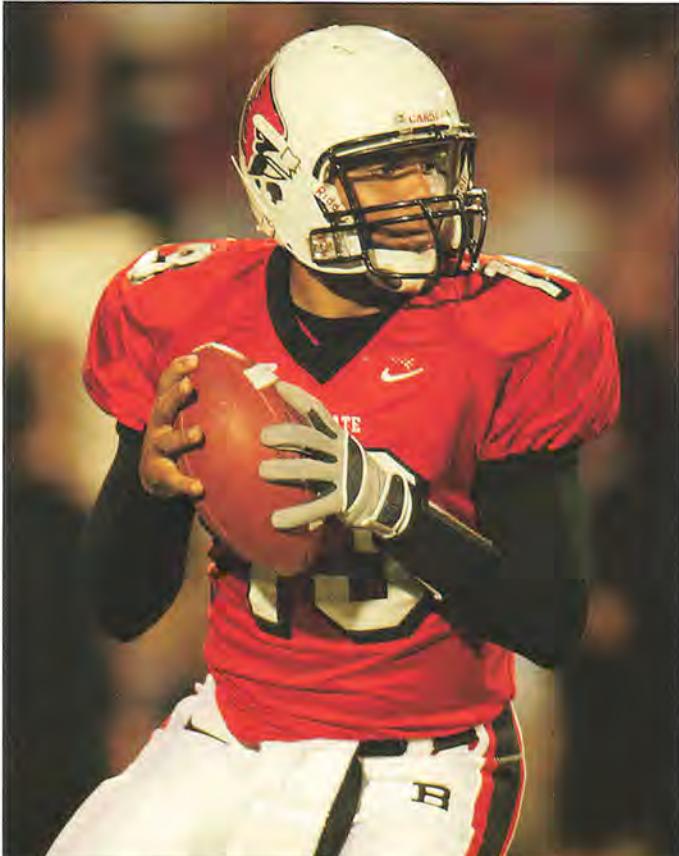
Wide receiver Dante Love and tight end Darius Hill return as juniors after combining for 94 receptions and more than 1,400 receiving yards last season. Hill tied a school single-season mark as 10 of his 42 receptions went for TDs. The 10 scoring grabs tied the single-season school record shared by Brian Oliver (1993) and

Dante Ridgeway (2003).

The Cardinals are hoping Louis Johnson will be healthy enough to return and be a deep threat in the fall. The sophomore wide receiver partially tore his ACL during spring practice and had surgery on May 5.

Running back MiQuale Lewis appears poised to regain his starting spot. He was the Cardinals' leading rusher last year before suffering a midseason shoulder injury against Buffalo that limited him to 48 carries for 280 yards — an impressive 5.8-yard average.

Ball State Photo Services



Nate Davis threw 18 touchdown passes as a true freshman to tie the Ball State school record.

Defense would appear to be the major question mark as to whether Ball State can take another step forward this season.

"Defensively, we have not been as productive as we need to be," said Hoke, who was a captain on the 1980 Ball State team and led the Cardinals with 150 tackles to earn second-team All-MAC honors. "We are not near where we need to be, and I take responsibility for that."

Last year's unit allowed 433.5 yards per game and ranked 115th nationally in pass defense (257.8 yards per game).

"Our mentality is now more physical and more aggressive," Hoke said of the Cardinals' revamped defensive scheme. "A lot of that falls back on us as coaches. We have talked a lot about defensive concepts and how we need to approach things."

Weakside linebacker Bryant Haines leads a defensive unit that returns just five starters. Haines, who was sixth on the squad last year with 49 tackles despite being limited to eight games by injury, will be counted on heavily as a playmaker.

"Bryant Haines has played as well as anybody defensively this spring," Hoke said. "He needs to stay healthy. He makes us a better defense because of how he plays."

"Bryant is a quiet individual who leads by example. He shows up everyday and has the abilities to make plays and makes them."

Middle linebacker Wendell Brown also returns alongside Bryant. Brown was second on the squad with 83 tackles a year ago.

Cornerbacks Trey Lewis and Trey Buice look to improve after gaining a year of starting experience. Running back B.J. Hill has been moved to corner to add depth and competition to the position.

"He loves the game and knows the game," Hoke said of Hill, who was Ball State's third-leading rusher last season. "He is very aggressive."

Up front, nose tackle Amara Koroma and rush end Cortlan Booker return. Booker was a second-team all-conference selection in 2006 with a team-leading 14 tackles for loss.

Special teams are a mixed bag as Ball State must replace Lou Groza Award semifinalist Brian Jackson at place-kicker, but brings back punter Chris Miller, a 2007 Playboy preseason All-American. Miller was second in the country last season with a 46.3-yard punting average, and the two-time All-MAC selection placed 20 of his 57 punts inside the opponents' 20-yard line.

"Chris Miller is a weapon for our football team," Hoke said. "He has been very proficient in his career and is continuing to work hard to get better and better at his craft." ■ — By Terry Douglass



Ball State's Chris Miller

Punter Chris Miller finished second in the country, averaging 46.3 yards as a sophomore.

AT A GLANCE



STRENGTHS

Seven starters return for an offensive unit that ranked No. 15 in the country in passing efficiency (150.27 rating) and No. 16 in passing offense (259.3 yards per game). Quarterback **Nate Davis** is back to lead the unit after completing 150-of-245 attempts for 1,975 yards and 18 touchdowns, while splitting time with senior **Joey Lynch**.

QUESTION MARKS

The secondary is a concern as Ball State ranked 115th nationally in passing defense and lost one of its best players to graduation in safety **Erik Keys**. In an effort to shore things up in the back end of the defense, the Cardinals have moved running back **B.J. Hill** to cornerback. The squad will also need to replace place-kicker **Brian Jackson** and improve upon a No. 102 national ranking in punt returns.

2006 RECORD: 5-7

CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Punter **Chris Miller** has been named to the Playboy All-America 2007 preseason squad. Named an All-American by The Sporting News last season, the junior ranked second in the country with an average of 46.3 yards per punt. Described by coach **Brady Hoke** as "a weapon," Miller placed 20 of his 57 punts inside the opponents' 20-yard line.

A 31	Eastern Michigan	W, 38-20
S 9	Indiana	L, 24-23
S 16	@Purdue	L, 38-28
S 23	North Dakota St.	L, 29-24
S 30	Northern Illinois	L, 40-28
O 7	@Buffalo	W, 55-25
O 14	@Central Michigan	L, 18-7
O 21	Western Michigan	L, 41-27
O 28	@Miami (Ohio)	W, 20-17
N 4	@Michigan	L, 34-28
N 14	@Toledo	W, 20-17
N 24	Kent St.	W, 30-6

REMODELING PROJECT

Ball State's Scheumann Stadium is getting a facelift prior to this season's home opener on Aug. 30 against Miami (Ohio). The renovation project includes enclosing the north end of the stadium with a grass seating area, a larger communications center, club level seating with 16 suites, new restroom and concession areas, improved access for the disabled and the installation of a field-turf playing surface.

SECRET WEAPON

Tight end **Darius Hill** was tabbed as "The Best Player You've Never Heard Of" by SI.com. That could change if the junior can improve upon last year's numbers, which included 42 receptions for 741 yards and 10 TDs.

TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Dante Love	5-10	176	Jr.	DE	Drew Duffin	6-3	253	So.
	DeAndrie Rogers	6-3	190	So.		Brandon Crawford	6-3	248	So.
TE	Madaris Grant	6-5	228	So.	NT	Amara Koroma	6-2	275	Sr.
	Kevin Steinhaus	6-3	231	Fr.		Roger Morris	6-1	230	Sr.
LT	Andre Ramsey	6-5	305	Jr.	DT	Jacob Jordan	6-3	280	Sr.
	Adam Cole	6-6	284	Jr.		Kaylon Woods	6-2	255	Fr.
LG	John Purdy	6-6	313	So.	RE	Cortland Booker	6-2	245	Sr.
	Lance Helton	6-5	294	Fr.		Antonio Beasley	6-0	231	Jr.
C	Dan Gerberry	6-3	287	Jr.	SLB	Kenny Meeks	6-2	234	So.
	Jordan Applegate	6-5	296	So.		Chris Clancy	6-2	221	So.
RG	Travis Arnold	6-8	291	Fr.	MLB	Wendell Brown	6-3	295	Sr.
	Eric Larimer	6-5	293	Jr.		Spain Cosby	5-11	221	So.
RT	Robert Brewster	6-5	312	Jr.	WLB	Bryant Haines	6-5	230	Jr.
	Justin Penland	6-6	295	Sr.		Mike Dorulla	6-0	216	Sr.
TE	Darius Hill	6-6	233	Jr.	CB	Trey Lewis	5-6	184	So.
	Jacob Basker	6-2	224	Fr.		B.J. Hill	5-7	180	Jr.
WR	Dan Dunford	5-10	185	Sr.	SS	Chris Allen	5-10	188	Sr.
	Louis Johnson	6-1	182	Jr.		Alex Knipp	6-0	193	So.
QB	Nate Davis	6-2	214	So.	FS	Eddie Burk	5-11	202	Sr.
	Zach Jones	6-7	226	So.		Marcus McClure	6-0	184	Jr.
TB	Mike Lewis	5-6	184	So.	CB	Trey Buice	5-7	179	Jr.
	Corey McGee	5-11	193	So.		Jakeem Gregory	5-9	173	Fr.
PK	Jake Hogue	5-9	186	Fr.	P	Chris Miller	6-2	205	Jr.

Returning starters in bold

Coaches Call-in

Every Friday morning join hosts Coach Ron Brown, the FCA staff, and Gordon Thiessen. Topics are prepared in order to address the connection between God and sports by how to do sports God's way.

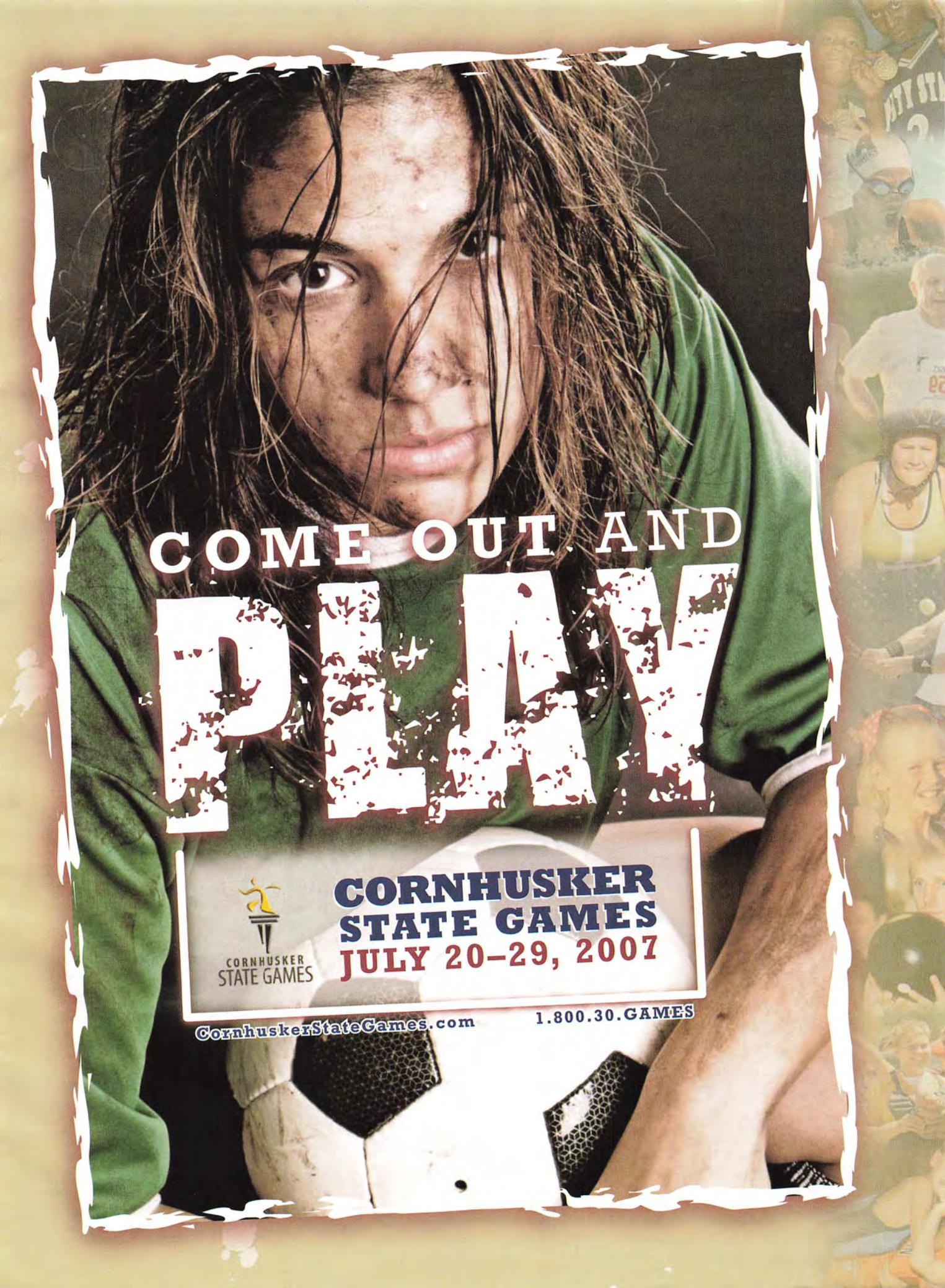
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BASEBALL/SOFTBALL NOTES



Scott Bruhn

Nebraska catcher Mitch Abeita suffered a broken right fibula on a play at the plate in the game against Kansas State at the Big 12 Tournament in Oklahoma City.

GRIT AND DETERMINATION

Let Johnny Dorn's pitching performance characterize what was best about the 2007 Nebraska baseball season. The Cornhuskers handled adversity with grit and determination.

Coach Mike Anderson called on Dorn to keep his team's NCAA regional hopes alive, to stave off elimination, and the junior right-hander from Grand Island, Neb., responded.

Dorn pitched a five-hit, complete-game, 11-1 victory against Big West Conference champion University of California-Riverside on the third day of the Tempe, Ariz., Regional. He threw 145 pitches in 100-degree weather, as Nebraska reversed a 10-5 first-round loss to UC-Riverside.

And though the Cornhuskers would fall to regional champion, and host, Arizona State 19-7 that night, they gave everything they had to finish a star-crossed season at 32-27.

The record was their worst since 1998, when they finished 24-20 in Dave Van Horn's first season as coach. But they advanced to NCAA regional play for the eighth time in nine seasons, evidence of how the program has developed. Qualifying for a regional has become the norm, the expectation.

Despite what for them was a modest record, Nebraska earned a regional bid, as a No. 3 seed, with an RPI of 29, one of the most difficult schedules in the country and a fourth-place finish in the Big 12, which sent six teams to regionals. In addition to Nebraska, Texas, Missouri, Texas A&M, Oklahoma State and Baylor advanced. Only Oklahoma State and A&M moved on to super-regionals, however.



Johnny Dorn

BITS & PIECES

- Nebraska won five of its final six Big 12 series, coming back in the last two series against Baylor and at Kansas after losing the first of the three games. The Cornhuskers went 1-2 in the Big 12 Tournament at Oklahoma City, winning the opener against Texas A&M 5-3 but dropping games against Kansas State, 5-1, and Texas, 5-4. They also lost pitcher Charlie Shirek and catcher Mitch Abeita in the tournament.

Abeita suffered a broken right fibula on a questionable play against Kansas State.

- After the 10-5 loss in the first game of the regional, Nebraska came back to eliminate scrappy Monmouth 6-5 on the second day. Nebraska's pitching gave out in the regional. Anderson used nine pitchers in the first two games, picking junior right-hander Luke Wertz for the first game.

Wertz was the Cornhuskers' most effective pitcher at the end of the regular season, sharing conference pitcher-of-the-week honors in the final series at Kansas. He allowed two runs on eight hits and struck out eight in eight innings to gain credit for the

series-clinching victory. He was 4-0 with a 2.05 earned-run average going into the UC-Riverside game but lasted only 3.1 innings.

- Nebraska pitchers walked 27 in the four regional games, including 18 in the first two. They walked only three in the final game against Arizona State, small consolation considering the Sun Devils had 23 base hits. On the other hand, Arizona State was the nation's top-scoring team.

The Cornhuskers scored three runs in the top of the seventh inning to cut their deficit to 9-7 when the floodgates opened in the form of a grand slam in the bottom of the inning.

It was the second time in the past three years that the Sun Devils have ended Nebraska's season. They eliminated Nebraska from the 2005 College World Series, 8-7 in 11 innings.

- Andrew Brown was Nebraska's only senior. He led the team in home runs with 10 and finished second in runs-batted-in (44) and batting average (.329) to earn all-conference honorable mention, along with Dorn, Wertz, Abeita and infielder Craig Corriston. Juniors Tony Watson (left-handed pitcher) and Jeff Tezak (designated hitter) were second-team All-Big 12 selections.



Andrew Brown

Tezak led the Cornhuskers in hitting with a .335 average. Brown, Corriston and junior outfielder Andy Gerch were named to the all-regional team.

- Junior outfielder Bryce Nimmo was a first-team academic all-conference honoree for a second consecutive season. Wertz, pitcher Matt Foust and infielder Jake Mort were second-team selections.



Scott Bruun

Catcher Jamie Waldecker, one of five Nebraska seniors, is mobbed after a game-winning grand slam against Oklahoma State.

● The adversity through which Nebraska battled included the dismissal of preseason All-America shortstop Ryan Wehrle. Citing an accumulation of things, Anderson issued a statement the day after a loss against Coastal Carolina in early May: "We have decided to move forward without Ryan Wehrle as part of our baseball program. I wish him nothing but the best in his future endeavors."

Wehrle, who was hitting .241, reportedly planned to transfer to Cal State-Fullerton for his senior season, in the event he didn't sign to play professionally. He was an 18th round pick of the Cincinnati Reds in the 2006 draft but elected to return to Nebraska for his junior season.

FRUSTRATING FINISH

The Husker softball season ended in similarly frustrating fashion. Coach Rhonda Revelle's team played host to a regional and held a 1-0 lead in the bottom of the seventh inning of its second game, in the losers' bracket against Creighton. The Huskers had two outs and Ashley DeBuhr was pitching, with two strikes on the batter. But a hit batter, passed ball and fielding error ended the season, 2-1.

Nebraska, which was playing in a 13th consecutive regional, finished with a 37-20 record. It was the first time in school history that the



Ashley DeBuhr

Huskers had reached a regional and then failed to win at least once.

The Huskers lose five seniors: DeBuhr, catcher Jamie Waldecker, infielders Carmen Kier and Devin Porter and outfielder Jamie Borg. All but Borg were starters.

DeBuhr was a first-team all-conference selection for a second consecutive season and earned second-team All-Midwest Region honors, finishing with an 18-11 record and 1.65 ERA. Had the Huskers stayed alive for at least one more

game in the regional, she might have tried or broken the school record for strikeouts, held by Peaches James. DeBuhr finished nine behind James, with 936.

Sophomores Meghan Mullin and Crystal Carwile were the Huskers' leading hitters. Mullin batted .318. Carwile batted .289 with three home runs and a team-high 27 RBIs.

Sophomore pitcher Molly Hill finished with a 17-9 record and 1.05 ERA.

Hill, Carwile and sophomore Haley Long, a junior college transfer, earned second-team all-conference recognition. Long batted .268 but led Husker starters in conference play with a .271 average. She had four multi-hit games in conference play and struck out only six times.

Hill, Mullin and Borg were first-team academic all-conference honorees. ■

Take 5?

Nebraska AD chairs group advocating fifth season of eligibility

By Mike Babcock

Redshirted freshman Alex Henery would have handled an onside kick last season had Nebraska been so inclined. He would have, that is, until late in the season. At a certain point, the coaches decided that even if the need arose they wouldn't use him because they would be costing him a season of eligibility.

Ndamukong Suh, Nebraska's sophomore defensive tackle, was among 13 Cornhuskers who played as true freshmen two seasons ago. He saw limited action in the first two games before suffering a knee injury. He might have returned late in the season, but didn't in order to preserve four seasons of eligibility.

Also, two seasons ago, former Cornhusker quarterback Harrison Beck was pressed into action after starter Zac Taylor was knocked out of the Kansas State game, the 10th of the season. Playing in the fourth quarter against Kansas State cost Beck, a freshman, a full season of eligibility.

The NCAA football issues committee, of which Nebraska Athletic Director Steve Pederson is chairman, is advocating a proposal that would allow athletes five seasons of eligibility. The committee asked that every conference consider the proposal during spring meetings.

Currently, athletes have five years to complete four seasons of eligibility. The proposal would not increase the window of opportunity. It would allow five years to play five.

"We'll know more here as we begin to get the feedback from all the various conferences," Pederson said in early June. "But I think, in general, it's been fairly well received."

Football coaches and athletic directors are in favor of such a change in the eligibility rules, said Pederson. "The opposition to this point has come in discussion with faculty members."

In the Big 12, however, "it wasn't an expressed concern that faculty members are opposed to it. It had more to do with them feeling like they wanted to know a little bit more before they formulated their final opinion," he said. "I think the issue they have to get over is the appearance we're telling student-athletes, 'We don't want you to graduate for



Nebraska's Steve Pederson is chairman of the NCAA football issues committee.

five years' That's not what we're telling them."

Studies show that more than 65 percent of football student-athletes spend five years completing degrees anyway. And when that percentage is adjusted to account for those who leave to play professional football, it's even higher. "So the reality is they're not making a decision to delay graduation based on playing more football. They're going through a normal course of study," Pederson said.

"We have more and more kids who are graduating in December, after they've finished playing their last semester, or are graduating ahead of time and going to graduate school. I think that's fabulous. So our premise has been, you have this five-year clock to play; why is it imperative that you have one of those years where you sit and watch? What's the point of that? You're doing everything that everybody else is doing. You're standing on the sideline at the game. You take part in every single part of this football program except going on the field during the game."

Injuries are a factor, particularly now that regular-season schedules include 12 games. Nebraska played 14 last season, with the conference championship game and the Cotton Bowl. And injuries took a toll. The Cornhuskers' I-back committee of four, for example, was reduced to two by the time Cotton Bowl preparations began, and those two were less than 100-percent healthy as well.

"So as time goes on, I think the injury factor is a concern," said Pederson.

Being able to use more players on special teams, for example, could alleviate that.

Some might be concerned that once student-athletes were allowed five seasons of eligibility, the next step would be a six-year window to account for injuries, which, in turn, would be more costly. But that's not the intent. "This would be a straight five years. If you get hurt two of those years and can't play, that's the way it goes. We're not asking for additional scholarships," Pederson said.

Football has "taken these hits," he said. Scholarship numbers have dropped to 85, and if 20 players on scholarship are redshirted, that leaves 65, not a "dramatic number" for a football team.

"I think the time has come to say, 'What's the harm in letting people play all five years? What's the downside of that?' You still have 85 on scholarship. You still have the majority of your players going (to school) the whole time anyway," he said. "So the idea that you're costing other people opportunities is not real factual. There wouldn't be kids that would graduate after four years so they'd have 25 new people take their place. That's not the reality of it. The reality is we have to look at what's really happening. And what's really happening is that they're here for five years anyway." ■

Final 2006 Ratings

Associated Press

Team (Record)	Points
1. Florida (13-1)	1,624
2. Ohio State (12-1)	1,492
3. LSU (11-2)	1,452
4. USC (11-2)	1,389
5. Boise State (13-0)	1,383
6. Louisville (12-1)	1,338
7. Wisconsin (12-1)	1,288
8. Michigan (11-2)	1,145
9. Auburn (11-2)	1,112
10. West Virginia (11-2)	1,035
11. Oklahoma (11-3)	933
12. Rutgers (11-2)	884
13. Texas (10-3)	772
14. California (10-3)	697
15. Arkansas (10-4)	677
16. Brigham Young (11-2)	673
17. Notre Dame (10-3)	553
18. Wake Forest (11-3)	551
19. Virginia Tech (10-3)	407
20. Boston College (10-3)	353
21. Oregon State (10-4)	291
22. TCU (11-2)	279
23. Georgia (9-4)	204
24. Penn State (9-4)	183
25. Tennessee (9-4)	181

USA Today

Team (Record)	Points
1. Florida (13-1)	1,575
2. Ohio State (12-1)	1,435
3. LSU (11-2)	1,418
4. USC (11-2)	1,345
5. Wisconsin (12-1)	1,328
6. Boise State (13-0)	1,275
7. Louisville (12-1)	1,270
8. Auburn (11-2)	1,119
9. Michigan (11-2)	1,092
10. West Virginia (11-2)	1,012
11. Oklahoma (11-3)	849
12. Rutgers (11-2)	841
13. Texas (10-3)	791
14. California (10-3)	716
15. Brigham Young (11-2)	615
16. Arkansas (10-4)	592
17. Wake Forest (11-3)	535
18. Virginia Tech (10-3)	494
19. Notre Dame (10-3)	485
20. Boston College (10-3)	388
21. TCU (11-2)	339
22. Oregon State (10-4)	206
23. Tennessee (9-4)	202
24. Hawaii (11-3)	152
25. Penn State (9-4)	142

BCS Schedule

Jan. 1, 2008 — Rose Bowl, ABC
 Jan. 1, 2008 — Sugar Bowl, Fox
 Jan. 2, 2008 — Fiesta Bowl, Fox
 Jan. 3, 2008 — Orange Bowl, Fox
 Jan. 7, 2008 — National Championship Game (New Orleans, La.), Fox

Games of Interest

Sept. 8 — Notre Dame at Penn State
 Sept. 8 — Miami at Oklahoma
 Sept. 15 — USC at Nebraska
 Sept. 15 — Notre Dame at Michigan
 Sept. 29 — Auburn at Florida
 Oct. 6 — Oklahoma at Texas
 Oct. 6 — Florida at LSU
 Oct. 20 — USC at Notre Dame
 Oct. 20 — Auburn at LSU
 Oct. 27 — Nebraska at Texas
 Oct. 27 — West Virginia at Rutgers
 Nov. 3 — Wisconsin at Ohio State
 Nov. 8 — Louisville at West Virginia
 Nov. 10 — USC at California
 Nov. 10 — Michigan at Wisconsin
 Nov. 17 — Ohio State at Michigan
 Nov. 29 — Rutgers at Louisville
 Dec. 1 — Big 12 Championship (San Antonio)
 Dec. 1 — ACC Championship (Jacksonville)
 Dec. 1 — SEC Championship (Atlanta)

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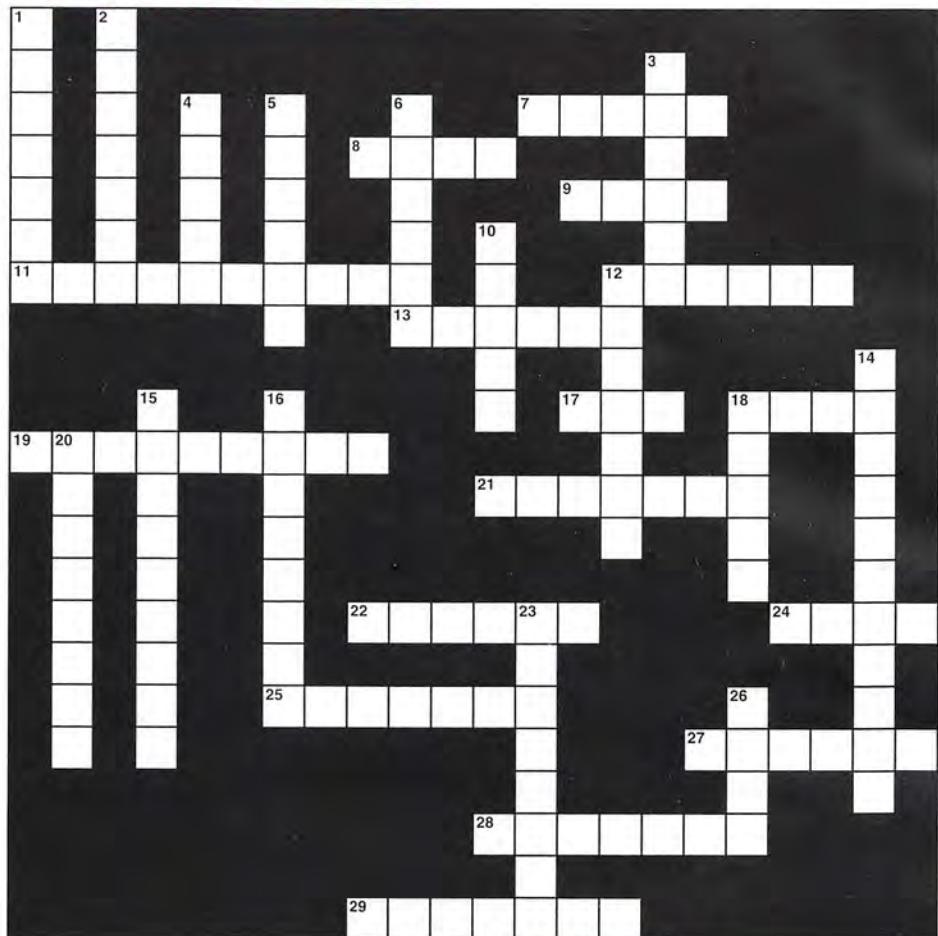
ACROSS

- 7 NU's 2006 leader in solo tackles
- 8 Taylor's backup in 2006
- 9 Jay Norvell's new school
- 11 2007 Big 12 Championship location
- 12 Wears No. 2
- 13 Opponent in opener
- 17 Network for NU-USC game
- 18 2007 NU quarterback recruit
- 19 Opponent in Big 12 opener
- 21 2006 national champion
- 22 NU's career total offense leader
- 24 NU's career tackles leader
- 25 NU's career receiving leader
- 27 Wears No. 99
- 28 Ahman Green's new NFL team
- 29 Big 12's leading passer in 2006

DOWN

- 1 1992 Outland Trophy winner
- 2 Husker taken in 2nd round of NFL Draft
- 3 Quarterback who transferred from Arizona State
- 4 NU's career scoring leader
- 5 1997 Outland Trophy winner
- 6 NU's offensive coordinator
- 10 Wore retired No. 60
- 12 2008 NU quarterback recruit
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- 16 First Husker taken in 2007 NFL Draft
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- 20 2006 Big 12 champion
- 23 NU's defensive coordinator
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Answers in August issue



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Manage The Offense

Callahan's system requires the No. 1 quarterback to get the majority of the practice reps



Mike Babcock

FOR THE RECORD, Bill Callahan is a "one-quarterback guy." The description was his, offered during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference in response to a question about the possibility of his using a two-quarterback system. "I've seen a lot of people do it and do it effectively," he said.

Florida is the logical example right now.

The Gators won the national championship last season using two quarterbacks, senior Chris Leak and true freshman Tim Tebow, who is among an increasing number of players graduating high school early in order to get started on their college careers.

Two freshmen in Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class, quarterback Patrick Witt and running back Marcus Mendoza, are such players. They enrolled at mid-term and practiced in the spring.

In any case, though Leak was on the field a majority of the time during Florida's title run and was clearly the Gators' No. 1 quarterback, Tebow made a significant contribution. So obviously, coach Urban Meyer was able to prepare him with practice repetitions. He was a true freshman, remember.

After Callahan identifies his No. 1 quarterback a couple of weeks into training camp, however, the No. 2 guy will spend much of practice, except for individual drills, watching.

"We put so much on the quarterback here, and it's important that they get the majority of reps," said Callahan. "I really like to give our guy anywhere between 85 and 90 percent of the reps so they'll be well-prepared come game day. The second-team guy, their reps are a little bit limited.

"They get their reps during training camp (early), and they get their throwing in during different periods of the practice format. By and large, the second-team guy is taking more of the mental reps during the week, and they've really got to prepare themselves as the starter (that way)."

To understand why Callahan has always been a one-quarterback guy is to understand a little bit about the West Coast offense he employs. Bill Walsh, a seminal figure in the development of the offense, has said that a quarterback's performance has to be "manipulated," that "to a degree coaching can make a quarterback, and it is certainly the most important factor in his success.

"The design of the team's offense is the key to a quarterback's performance."

Coach and quarterback have to be in tune, Walsh has said.

To be in tune with Callahan, whose passion for offense

is hardly disguised as he peers down through reading glasses at meticulously drawn playsheets contemplating his next move, requires all of the contact time between coach and quarterback that NCAA rules allow, and then some.

So in this case, "in tune" is only an approximation. After two springs (he enrolled in January after transferring from Butler County Community College) and two seasons, Zac Taylor was fairly in tune, as reflected by his performance; he was the Big 12 offensive player of the year.

Taylor was a product of the system. He was successful because of the offense. But also the offense was successful because of what he brought to it, decision-making, composure under pressure, understanding his limitations and the intangible of character, his leadership.

Taylor wasn't a great athlete, by his own admission, and no one used the cliché "rifle arm" to describe his passing. But he was efficient in what he did, what he was asked to do.

Prior to the Spring Game, Shawn Watson, Nebraska's new offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, was asked what he wanted to see from Sam Keller and Joe Ganz.



Bill Callahan says he's always been a "one-quarterback guy."

"We want to see them manage our offense," he said. "Manage means when called upon, to get us in the right play. When it comes to making decisions, we want to see them use the offense, use the primary progression and check downs, keeping the sticks moving and keeping pressure on the defense."

Watson's word choice is instructive. The quarterback is a manager in Callahan's offense. He uses the offense in the way it is supposed to be used, making decisions by carefully created rules. And in order to make those decisions, he has to understand what the offense can do if used properly.

Callahan's offense is a little like the computer on which this is being written, complex and capable of doing a lot more if the user only understood its intricacies better. I'm not particularly computer literate, unlike Callahan's quarterback, who has to be offense literate — and know where he fits.

"The quarterback in this offense is a guy who distributes the ball to the playmakers," said Watson. "He has to be a playmaker with his decision-making. We put a lot of things on him at the line of scrimmage. We put a lot of things on him in terms of making 'passing' decisions."

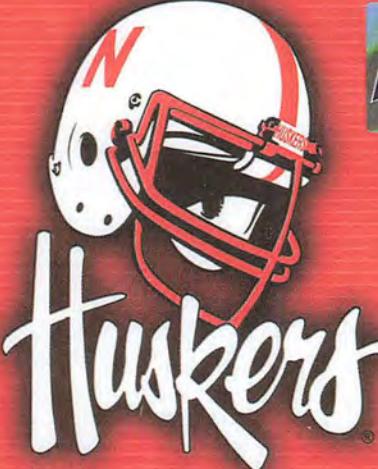
His job is "not forcing square pegs into round holes. It's taking what the defense gives," Watson said. "That's the art in being efficient and effective in this offense."

Preparing one quarterback to be that is hard enough, much less two. ■

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